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FRANK LESLIE'S

BOYS' AND GIRLS' WEEKLY.

An Illustrated Journal of Amusement, Adventure, and Instruction.

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"WATCHING THE HUGE BEAST WITH A KEEN EYE, MONA GROUNDED HIS SPEAR AND HELD THE POINT DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE ANIMAL, INCLINING IT AT AN ACUTE ANGLE. CONSEQUENTLY, THE LION THREW HIMSELF ON THE SPEAR AND WAS LITERALLY IMPALED."

WANDERING WILLIE;

Or, Lost in the Bush.

The Adventures of a Missionary's Son in the Wilds of Africa.

CHAPTER IV.

BIRDIE DISAPPEARS.

IT was evident from the bold and fearless way in which Monamunza attacked the lion that he was accustomed to war with wild, fierce animals.

There was no faltering or hesitation.

He comprehended the danger in an instant, and prepared to meet it as a brave man should.

His heart was filled with gratitude to Willie for saving him from a life of slavery, and, perhaps, simple savage as he was, his Christian training taught him that it would be right to lay down that life for his preserver or any of his friends.

Placing himself between the prostrate body of the senseless Birdie Merlin and the lion, Mona awaited some move on the part of his enemy.

The lion lashed his flanks with his tail, and his mane seemed to actually bristle as he uttered roar after roar.

This tremendous roaring made the ground shake, and found an echo in the far-off hills.

Suddenly Monamunza threw himself down on the ground, lying on the flat of his back.

The lion no sooner saw this than he stopped roaring and sprang upon him.

Watching the huge beast with a keen eye, Mona grounded his spear and held the point directly in front of the animal, inclining it at an acute angle.

Consequently the lion threw himself on the spear and was literally impaled, falling a dead and gory mass on the African.

Willie had not had time to act.

All that we have narrated was done so suddenly that the lion was upon Monamunza almost before he could realize it.

"I must save him," he cried.

Running forward, he discharged his pistol into the lion's head, but the act was unnecessary, as the spear had penetrated his heart.

Mona extricated himself from the superincumbent mass, and shaking the blood from his naked body—he only wearing a cloth around his loins—laughed in a satisfied manner.

"Much blood; no bite," he remarked.

Willie grasped his hand with the utmost cordiality.

"I shall believe, more than ever, now," he said, "that virtue is its own reward. You have lost no time in repaying me for the service I rendered you when I saved you from the slave-dealer."

He now turned his attention to Birdie, who, by the aid of some water from the stream, was quickly revived.

Goliah and Carlo came up too late to be of any assistance, but they evinced considerable interest in the dead lion.

The dog smelled around the carcass, and barked over it as if it was a strange species of canine which he had never seen before.

"Eatee lion. Good!" said Mona.

"Eat that!" replied Goliah. "I'd have to be mighty hungry, my friend, before I touch um meat like that."

Monamunza showed his ivories, and, borrowing Willie's knife, began to skin the beast, afterward cutting up the choice parts.

Willie explained all that happened to Birdie, who soon recovered from her fright.

They sat down on some flat stones, near which Goliah had lighted a fire, while the two Africans prepared supper.

"I think, Birdie," said Willie, while a gleam of enthusiasm lighted up his handsome and intelligent face, "that Providence is on our side and favors my efforts."

"Yes, indeed," replied Birdie. "Meeting with Mona is great good luck."

"You agree with me, then, that he has seen my father?"

"I do not doubt it for an instant."

"But," continued Willie, while his countenance clouded, "there are other missionaries in Africa."

"True; yet I incline to the belief that Mr. Hill is the one who has been at the Lake Village, and is now at Kasonga," replied Birdie; adding, "I think I have heard of this place."

"When, and how?"

"I was present one evening at a meeting of the Christian Association, when an elderly gentleman, who had been in Africa, read a paper about the powerful chiefs on the west coast, who were most opposed to the faith, and if I am not mistaken, he alluded to Kasonga as the headquarters of a bloodthirsty tyrant."

"Sankorra! Was that the name?"

"I think it was, but I will not be sure."

Willie sighed deeply, and he hid his face in his hands.

"Oh, I am so grieved!" exclaimed Birdie. "I should not have told you this when, if the missionary Mona speaks of is your father, he is supposed to be in the power of Sankorra, at Kasonga."

"Never mind, Birdie," replied Willie, looking up; "it is something to have gained a clue to him."

All at once a peculiar trumpeting noise was

"A HUGE SNAKE, WHITE, WITH BLACK RINGS ROUND THE BODY, AND HAVING HAIR ON ITS NECK LIKE THE MANE OF A HORSE, REARED ITS HUGE PYTHON-LIKE HEAD AND HIDEOUS CREST ABOVE THE WATER."

"WANDERING WILLIE" IS BY ONE OF OUR FAVORITE AUTHORS. READ IT!

heard, and Monamunza left off cooking some tidbits of lion's flesh to run up to Willie.

"Lendee shoot gun!" he exclaimed.

"What for?" inquired Willie.

"Kill elephant. See?"

Willie looked in the direction he indicated, and saw a couple of young elephants descending the sloping, beaten path to the stream.

This was where the lion had first been noticed.

It appeared as if the surrounding neighborhood, much of which was primeval forest, abounded with game, which came about sunset to drink of the water.

Willie at once gave the African his pistol, with which the latter ran after the elephants.

These were of no great size, which was all the better, regarding them in the light of an article of food.

When he got near enough he hurled his spear into the flank of one of the awkward looking beasts, and running up, shot him in the eye with a remarkably good aim, as he fell, quivering on one knee.

This sufficed to kill him, and the other elephant ran away.

Monamunza extracted the spear, and was about to pursue the flying animal when Willie intercepted him.

"Hold!" he exclaimed; "what are you about to do?"

"Killee more."

"No, I will not permit it. One elephant is more than we can eat, as we have no means of preserving the flesh in this hot climate, and it is wrong to wantonly slaughter the meanest of God's creatures. Let us be satisfied with what we have and be thankful for it."

Monamunza regarded him with astonishment.

Belonging to a tribe which depended mainly on hunting and fishing for their maintenance, he considered it perfectly lawful to kill all the game luck threw in his way.

He yielded, however, to Willie's orders, and proceeded to dismember the elephant as he had done the lion, with a practiced hand.

In an hour's time the feast was ready.

The lion's flesh was somewhat rank, and neither Birdie nor Willie cared for it. But some slices of elephant's trunk they found a great delicacy.

Nothing of any importance occurred during the night, and the next day the little party broke camp and started for the lake village, under the guidance of Monamunza.

It was Willie's intention to stay with those villagers until he could gain some definite intelligence respecting Sankorra and his captive.

The country they passed through was arid and parched, as it was the dry season.

From November to May is called the wet season, and it was now the beginning of July, yet they met with numerous water-courses, in which were deep holes filled with water.

In addition to these were natural ponds, which always contained more or less water, though it was very stagnant and nauseous, besides being at times brackish, owing to the large amount of salt in the soil.

They were all glad when the journey was over and they came in sight of Lake Tipo-Tipo.

It was of small size, the open surface of the water being an oval of two miles long by one wide, and around the margin was a belt of floating vegetation.

The huts of which the village was composed were built on platforms raised about six feet above the surface of the water, supported on stout poles driven into the bed of the lake.

Some were oblong, others round, the former usually having a projecting roof over the door. The walls were made of wood, the interstices filled with clay, and the roofs were made of grass and long reeds.

Underneath the platforms canoes were moored and nets for fishing hung to dry.

On the ground surrounding the lake the villagers grew their corn and sweet potatoes, while further inland they had pitfalls in which to catch game.

The people lived entirely in these huts with their fowls and goats, the latter being taken on shore to graze.

The canoes were simple dugouts, twenty feet in length, and their paddles were like large circular, shallow spoons, with long, straight handles.

Monamunza halted the party about half a mile from the lake, stating that his people did not like strangers, and that it would be necessary to make medicine before he would be allowed to take them to the hut in which his mother and sister lived.

Accordingly he started at a run to announce his return and make preparations for the introduction of his new friends.

Before he went he said:

"Take care of Warna."

"Who is he?" asked Willie.

"It is a boy," he replied. "They wander about and capture men and women, whom they sell to Sankorra."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Kasonga is full of slaves. Look out for Warna."

Willie determined that he would do so, as he had no great wish to be captured and sold into a life-long slavery.

Monamunza was gone two hours, during which time they had nothing to divert them but the croaking of innumerable frogs in the marshy ground.

The noise of some resembled that made by caulkers and riveters, while others, larger or nearer, sounded more like smiths forging, and a few made a creak like a rachet-drill, so that, with a little stretch of the imagination, it was not difficult to fancy oneself in a ship-building yard.

In time Monamunza came back, accompanied by the medicine man of the tribe, who was called the Myanga, and with him was a boy.

He wanted a present of cloth or beads, which are the only things received as money in the interior of Africa, there being no such thing known as a gold or silver currency.

Willie had neither beads nor cloth, but the wild Myanga saw a pair of earrings in Birdie Merlin's ears and pointed to them.

"He wants eardrops," said Monamunza.

Birdie, always self-sacrificing and feeling that earrings were sadly out of place in the wilds of Africa, at once took them out.

The Myanga received them with much satisfaction.

The rage for earrings among some tribes is very remarkable. They all, men and women, pierce their ears, enlarging the lobes to a monstrous extent, wearing in them pieces of wood, rings of brass wire, pieces of gourd, and a variety of articles, including such things as twisted nails and horseshoes.

The boy brought a fowl and a small goat, they being necessary for the performance.

"Mishiri," said Mona," try stoppee this, but no use. Only few mans learn to be good."

The medicine man carried a large pot of water, a bark trough with a stick fastened across the middle, a basket of clay, shreds of bark, mud, roots, a leafless branch, a hoe, knives, an ax, and other things.

The boy was adorned with a streak of pipe-clay down his nose. He took a seat on the trough, the man sitting opposite him, and mumbling mystic words, they scraped the bark off the roots and reduced it to powder.

The man now blew the powdered bark toward the sun, and sprinkled water on the ground.

Then he cut the throats of the fowl and the goat, their blood being made to mingle with the water and more powdered bark in the trough, the whole being stirred up with a stick.

After that the man and boy anointed themselves with the nauseous mixture, and sprinkled some of it on each one of the party, Monamunza smiling as he received his share.

This completed the childish and idiotic ceremony, which showed in what a dense state of ignorance the natives of Africa are plunged.

An incantation to the sun now followed, and the medicine-man announced that there was now no chance of the whites bringing witchcraft into the village, and they might enter.

Goliah was much impressed with this performance, for he had been in the habit of consulting a Voodoo woman while in the South.

They all marched to the lake, and quite a fleet of boats had assembled to look at them.

Monamunza's mother and sister removed to the house of a friend, for they thought they would show more civility by entirely giving up their hut to their relative's guests.

Presents of corn, fowls, eggs, fish, and the flesh of goats was freely made to them, and they fared better than they had done since the shipwreck.

The next day they made a round of visits in Mona's boat, the conversation being translated by Mona, who had told every one of the gallant way in which Willie had saved him from the slave-dealer.

Ingratitude was certainly not one of the vices of the Tipo-Tipos, for the boat was filled up to the gunwale with presents.

Mona also said that Willie wanted to find his father, the "Mishiri," as they all called him.

Every one remembered the good white man who had tried to teach them to read the big book, but who was carried off by Warna before his task was half completed.

The people shook their heads sadly when his name was mentioned, for they all believed that his "medicine" was good.

The names Kasonga and Sankorra were frequently mentioned, and it was the general opinion that Mr. Hill was a slave or that he had been put to death.

Next day Willie went out fishing with Mona, and had excellent sport.

In the afternoon a report came to the village, by some of its inmates who had been out hunting, that the much-dreaded Warna had been seen in their neighborhood.

Fearing a raid, the inhabitants of Tipo-Tipo kept in their houses, and a guard was kept up night and day for fear of a surprise, though with their boats under their houses and the water all round them, there was no reason to be much danger.

"Will the Warna swim?" asked Willie.

"No swimmee, sir," replied Monamunza.

"Why not?"

"They not swim in this lakee, because much big snake bite and killee them.

"Snakes in the lake?"

"Yes," replied Mona, nodding his head vehemently, and extending his arm half a dozen times. "So biggee, much long."

"Glad to know it, for I was going to take a bath," said Willie.

While he was speaking he heard a plunge in the water.

Instantly running to the platform outside the house, followed closely by Carlo, he saw Goliah splashing about and divesting himself in the water.

"Hi, yah! Dis bully!" he exclaimed.

Carlo wagged his tail.

"Come 'long, boy," continued Goliah. "You'n me have a good swim, for sunk."

Thus urged, the dog jumped into the lake and was soon swimming toward the negro.

"Take caree!" cried Monamunza; "heap deadly snakee."

Goliah laughed loudly.

"Shoo!" he replied; "you can't scare dis child."

Willie was inexpressibly shocked at seeing Goliah in such danger, after what he had heard.

"For heaven's sake!" he shrieked, "come back!"

"What for, Marse Willie?"

"It is as he says. There are venomous snakes in this lake."

Goliah only laughed louder, and began to play with Carlo, splashing him with water, and, in fact, he acted like one deprived of his senses.

"Come back! come back!" again cried Willie.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Goliah; "we have lots um fun."

Monamunza ran into the house, and presently came back with two empty gourds.

"Look!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" Willie asked.

"Black man's been drinking. See! both emptee."

"What was in them?"

"Pombi and palm-wine."

The mystery was now made clear as day.

Goliah was drunk.

Palm-wine is intoxicating, and pombi, a spirit made of corn, especially so.

The gourds, filled with this pestilent stuff, had been sent as a present by one of the Tipo-Tipo chiefs, but as neither Willie nor Birdie ever touched anything stronger than tea, coffee or water, they had passed unnoticed by them.

All at once Goliah uttered a loud cry.

The dog began to whine, and turned to swim to the house.

Instantly the cause became apparent.

A huge snake, white, with black rings round the body, and having hair on its neck like the mane of a horse, reared its huge python-like head and hideous crest above the surface of the water.

It was fully thirty feet in length, and as big round as a full-grown man's thigh.

Goliah was immediately partially sobered, but the imminence of the danger seemed to paralyze him.

He did not attempt to escape, contenting himself only with keeping himself afloat by treading water.

"Save me! save me!" he exclaimed.

Willie knew it would be certain death to go into the water, and that to do so would be to injure himself without doing any good to the negro.

He fired his pistol at the snake and struck it on the neck.

This, however, only served to enrage it.

Its head descended, and it struck Goliah on the shoulder, implanting its poison fangs deep in the skin.

The unhappy wretch uttered cry upon cry, and made frantic efforts to swim away.

Apparently contented with the damage it had inflicted, the monster dived gracefully to the depth of the lake and disappeared.

It was now Carlo's turn to be attacked.

The surface of the water seemed to become suddenly alive with reptiles, who attacked the negro and the dog.

Whether the poison was of a very virulent nature or not, or whether the victims of the snakes were overcome with fear, it is difficult to say; but after a few ineffectual efforts to keep afloat they both sank.

Monamunza had hastily dropped into his boat, and had commenced paddling to the scene of the catastrophe.

He was too late.

The negro and the dog had vanished from sight ere he could arrive.

Birdie Merlin clung shudderingly to Willie's arm.

"It is too horrible!" she said.

"Poor fellow," replied Willie; "if he had not been drinking this would not have happened."

"Is it not strange that the effects of drink should be found in this wild wilderness?" she added.

She might have known that human nature is the same all the world over.

Given the same opportunity for evil, the same inevitable results will follow.

Neither the body of Goliah nor the dog was ever recovered.

Willie regretted this, as he wished to give his faithful companion a grave, where he could shed a tear to his departed worth.

Carlo, too, was not one to be neglected in such a connection.

He also would have had a resting-place over which the green grass could grow.

This affair cast quite a gloom over Willie and Birdie.

They did not care to linger longer at the village in the lake.

Monamunza was appealed to, and asked if he would act as guide to Kasonga.

This was the goal that Willie's ambition wished to reach.

It mattered little if his father was a prisoner; he would have gladly shared his captivity with him.

If he was dead, then he did not care to live, except for Birdie's sake.

But Mona flatly refused to go, because he was afraid of the Warna, who would probably capture and sell them into slavery.

When he made known his determination, Willie and Birdie took their boat and rowed to land.

They wanted to walk about under the palm-trees, and talk about what was best to be done under the circumstances.

"I almost wish, for your sake, Birdie," he exclaimed, "that I had never come out here."

"Don't grieve on my account," she replied.

"Think of the hardships that are before us!"

"I will gladly share them with you."

He raised her hand affectionately to his lips.

"I thank heaven," he exclaimed, "for giving me such a companion. You are a true heroine, Birdie."

"God will protect us," she answered. "I have no fear while we can appeal to Him for protection. Yet I must admit that your mother was right when she told you to stay at home."

"That is true, but her sad death absolved me from any obligation on that account. She being gone, my father surely had a claim upon me, and who knows but that we may be the humble instruments under Providence of rescuing him from the savage king, in whose hands we have reason to suspect he has fallen?"

"I am willing to start for Kasonga," she said, "wherever you are."

"Would you not rather stay with Mona and his kind people?"

"Indeed I would not. Tipo-Tipo is no place for me when you are gone."

"Well, then, you will be safe, and live in comfort. Reflect!"

"It is useless," Birdie answered. "I have cast in my lot with you, Willie. Whithersoever thou goest, I will go. In the words of Ruth to Boaz 'Thy country will be my country, and thy God my God.'"

Willie was deeply touched by this evidence of devotion.

"Thank you, darling. I wished for that answer," he replied, "though I felt I had no right to ask you to make such a sacrifice."

Birdie clapped her hands gleefully.

"Oh, I am so glad!" she cried. "I was afraid that you were going to make me stay here while you went on alone, and that would have broken my heart!"

"Is it so very tender, then?"

"For you it is. In all that concerns you it is most fragile; but when shall we advance on the capital?"

"To-morrow. There will be no looking back, no turning ground, as did Lot's wife. We shall be like an invading army that has broken its bridges and burnt its boats. Our watchword will be 'Victory or death!'"

"Yes, we must conquer or die!" answered Birdie.

A bird, with peculiarly bright plumage, flew past and attracted the girl's attention.

One of its wings seemed hurt, for it flew with difficulty from one bough to another.

"Oh, the poor thing!" said Birdie. "Some hawk has been fighting it. Do catch it. I will take it home and nurse it till it is well."

"Stay here; I will try," replied Willie.

He at once gave chase to the bird, which, though undoubtedly injured, was still able to lead him a long way.

Whenever he got near enough, as he thought, to lay his hand upon it, the little thing hopped away, and was gone.

At length, weary and dispirited, he gave up the pursuit.

Returning to the spot where he had left Birdie, he was surprised to find that she was nowhere to be seen.

What could have become of her?

He was positive about the spot, because he remembered the gnarled trunk of a tree against which he had seen her leaning.

There could not possibly be two trees so much alike, for Nature never repeats herself in her eccentricities.

Had she wandered away, tired of waiting?

He called her name aloud half a dozen times, but received no answer.

A mocking echo alone answered him.

CHAPTER V.

THE EARTHQUAKE.

WILLIE was intensely distressed at the mysterious disappearance of Birdie, for which he could in no way account.

After shouting himself hoarse he ran about in various directions, without finding any trace of her.

At length he determined to return to the village.

At a short distance from the lake he encountered Monamunza, who was engaged in a singular occupation.

A favorite dish of the natives is dried white ants.

Mona was busied in preparing some of the whi e winged insects, which are eaten with a sort of succotash.

The ants are caught in an ingenious manner.

A light framework of cane or twigs is built over a large ant-hill, and covered with leaves, cunningly fastened together by sticking the mid-rib of each into the one above it.

A very small entrance is left open at the bottom, and under this is dug a round hole, a foot in diameter and two feet deep.

When the winged ants come out of the hill ready to migrate, they all make for this entrance and bustle each other into the hole, where they lose their wings and are unable to get out.

In the morning they are collected by the natives, who smoke them over slow fires to preserve them.

Mona ceased his work when he saw Willie.

"What matter?" he asked.

"I have lost my friend," replied Willie.

"Birdie gone?"

"Yes; I left her under some oil-palm trees while I went after a bird, and when I came back she had disappeared.

Mona looked puzzled.

"Warna!" he ejaculated.

"Is it possible she has been captured by those wretches?"

"Sure," replied Monamunza.

"God help her! What will they do with her?"

"Take her to Kasonga and sell her to the king. Warna never trades on the coast."

"Will they find out she is a girl?"

"If so, sell to king for wifee. But she dressee like boy, and they make work in field."

All at once there was a perceptible upheaving of the ground.

Both were thrown on their backs.

"What's that?" asked Willie.

"Great Spirit angry," answered Mona, who shook in every limb, and who became pale under his dark skin, all the blood having left his face.

They picked themselves up and looked around.

"It must have been an earthquake," said Willie.

"Yes, that's it."

"Do you often have such things here?"

"Not often very bad; sometimes shake houses down; once, longee time ago, all lake go dry."

"How?"

"Me not know. Hear father say so."

"Then it is a tradition?"

Monamunza shrugged his shoulders.

"Not know what that mean," he said.

Willie was on high ground, and the lake, with its numerous dwellings, was spread out before him.

He saw that what Mona said might really have happened, for the land on the west side of the lake sloped down into a valley.

Consequently, if any very severe shock of earthquake took place and opened a channel in the land, all the waters of the lake would run out and find its level in the valley.

This would leave the lake dry.

"Bad time coming," remarked Monamunza.

"Why?"

"Earthquakes always bring bad medicine."

"Nonsense!" said Willie. "It is wrong to be superstitious."

A strong smell of burning, followed by a cloud of smoke, now assailed their nostrils.

"Here I" cried Monamunza. "Warna burn."

"Burn what?"

"Grass, trees, everything. Make big fire."

A glance sufficed to show Willie that this was a fact, for the whole surrounding country on the east side was in flames.

It had been fired in various directions.

The roar of the immense grass fires thus created could be heard some distance off, and the tongues of flame seemed to leap up to the sky.

"Rain to-morrow," said Monamunza.

"How do you know?"

"Always rain after fire. Perhaps stop earthquake."

Although the African could not explain why it always rained after a big fire, he was, nevertheless, correct in his statement.

The enormous up-draft causes the warm air to rush to a cooler level, where its moisture is condensed and falls in the form of rain.

"Get home now, or else be burnt up," exclaimed Mona.

"Can we do nothing for Birdie?"

"Nothing. She gone!" answered Mona, phlegmatically.

Willie heaved a deep sigh, and slowly and sadly followed the African to the shore of Lake Tipo-Tipo.

He now realized the magnitude of the task he had undertaken: he felt the reality of all its dangers and privations, which had never been so vividly present to his young mind before.

If he had himself been led into captivity he would not have cared so much.

It was for Birdie he cared.

Goliah was gone, Carlo was at the bottom of the lake, and now poor little Birdie Merlin was in the hands of the cruel Warna.

And she loved him so dearly!

The fondest sister could not have loved him more.

He thought of the story of the children of Israel in the house of bondage, making bricks without straw, fainting under the lash of their cruel taskmasters, and the iron entered into his soul.

That event occurred in Africa nearly three thousand years ago, and still the land was cursed with the hideous blot of slavery.

Willie had to hurry to reach the edge of the lake.

The smoke and fire, driven by a strong wind, which had sprung up from the east and southeast, threatened to catch them up.

Terrible was the crackling roar of the flames.

Nor was this their only danger.

A third shock of earthquake convulsed the ground, which split into deep trenches, making huge pitiful gaps, into which it would have been death to fall.

Suddenly Willie heard a voice behind him, and turned sharply round.

"Help, good people!. Help!" cried the voice.

Willie saw a tall, elderly man, gaunt and skeletonic, riding on an emaciated mule, which seemed

to have the utmost difficulty in putting one foot before the other.

In vain the old man, who plied him vigorously with a stick, strove to make him increase his pace.

"Get up, you jade!" he said; "move thy legs faster! Oh, this is a great trial! Yea, verily, it is a great tribulation and a sore disaster."

Behind him were two natives of the Warua tribe, who were pursuing him on foot.

When they beheld Willie and Mona they halted, as if uncertain whether to continue the chase.

Monamunza had not his spear with him, but he carried instead a bow and arrows.

Bending the bow, he discharged an arrow at the foremost Warua, who began to run.

The arrow struck him in the rear, and, being nearly naked, it hung in the flesh like a tail.

He uttered a doleful cry, and ran with increased desperation, the arrow still sticking in him.

His companion kept close to him, and they were both quickly out of sight.

"Nearly kill one Warua. Good!" remarked Mona, with a complacent smile.

The elderly gentleman, who was dressed in torn and worn European garments, and whose hair was grizzled and gray, hagging unkempt over his shoulders, urged the mule to another effort, and approached.

It was difficult to say when his clothes had been new, as they were in a such a dilapidated condition that they might have come out of the Ark with Noah.

As he dismounted from the aged and worn-out mule, he patted the animal's neck.

"Take sustenance from this grass," he exclaimed, as he shook hands with Willie, and lifted his old felt hat, which was ingeniously patched with palm-leaves.

"Glad to see you, sir," replied Willie.

"Thou hast rendered me a service by putting in the carcass of that fleeing barbarian a piece of wood, barbed with iron, which these unenlightened creatures term an arrow."

"It was Monamunza, sir, who did that."

"Then, my thanks are due to the black man with the heathen name. Perhaps thou art desirous of knowing who I am, from whence I come, and whither I am going."

Willie admitted that he did entertain some slight curiosity in that particular.

"*My name, O ingenuous puer*, as Horace has it, is Praise-the-Lord Barebones. Barebones is my patronymic, and Praise-the-Lord was given me at my christening by my parents, who are members of the Society of Friends, and have their dwelling in Philadelphia."

"A Quaker?"

"That is what the profane have denominated the sect to which I have the honor to belong," replied Praise-the-Lord Barebones.

He was the descendant of an old Puritan family, and could trace his descent to a family who settled on the banks of the Delaware with Penn.

"How does it happen that I find you here?"

"I have been an humble laborer in the vineyard."

"A missionary?"

"That is my occupation. But a more thankless task I never engaged in since I left the State of Pennsylvania."

At this declaration Willie became greatly excited.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but are you acquainted with the Reverend Septimus Hill?"

"Thank the Lord, I know him well. Hill, of Manasquan, New Jersey, and I were at Princeton College together. I preceded him to Africa. Trials, ill-treatment, starvation and captivity have aged me."

"Mr. Hill is my father."

"Thy father!" cried Praise-the-Lord Barebones. "I am sincerely rejoiced to meet the son of so good a man. What brings you here?"

"To look for, and if need be, assist my father."

"I fear you will never find him. He is, I believe, in the hands of that truculent savage. Sankorra has captured him, and he has sworn that no Christian shall live upon whom he lays his sacrilegious and ungodly fingers."

"When did you see my father last, sir?"

"I was praying in the capital of their king, which is called Kasonga. It was my fortune to convert the king's chief wife, who has great influence over her husband. The enraged man. All his witch-finders, magicians and medicine-men were alarmed lest she would have them put to death. And they persuaded Sankorra to place the queen in a dungeon and kill me."

"But you escaped!"

"I did. Timely warning was given me. I obtained this mule and have wandered in the wilderness many days, living, like John the Baptist, on locusts and wild honey."

"And my father?"

"I received intelligence of him from some friendly natives on the road. They had seen thy father loaded with chains and driven along at the point of the spear."

"Then you do not know for a fact that he is dead?" said Willie, catching eagerly like a drowning man at any straw.

"Verily, I do not."

"He may be alive."

"It it is God's mercy," replied Praise-the-Lord Barebones. "I cannot say; he has had my prayer for his welfare night and morning; but that son of Belial whom they call Sankorra is a fiend in human shape."

"He went on to say that the Queen of Kasonga, whose name was Taborah, might in time be liberated.

If she regained her ascendency over the king all would go well, and the entire kingdom be converted to Christianity.

Taborah had received the faith sincerely. The seed had fallen upon fruitful soil and could not be eradicated.

From what Willie could gain from the information freely rendered him by Praise-the-Lord Barebones, the situation in Kasonga land stood thus:

The King Sankorra and the Queen Taborah had quarreled about her conversion to Christianity.

Taborah was placed in strict confinement, and was liable at any moment to lose her life.

The magicians, or medicine men, who swayed the minds of the ignorant and superstitious population, were in the ascendant.

They had intrigued successfully against the queen and driven away the missionary who had fought against their power.

These designing men, who lived on the credulity of the populace, were led by one Benguela.

It was Benguela who had induced King Sankorra to persecute the Christians.

If Queen Taborah could once more establish her hold upon the king's affections, then the magicians would lose their heads, blood would flow freely, but in the end the kingdom, which numbered forty thousand inhabitants, would be purged of its idolatry, and the land be converted to Christianity.

It was all a game of chance.

We must not, of course, omit the way in which an inscrutable and over-ruling Providence would think it best for the affairs of the kingdom to result.

"Friend," said Praise-the-Lord Barebones, "wilt thou extend thy hospitality to a poor old man who is weak and weary?"

"I am the guest of Monamunza, here," replied Willie; "but he is a Christian, thanks to my poor father's efforts, and—"

"Enough. If he has received the glad tidings, it is sufficient. He will be the Good Samaritan. It is part of his creed. Lead on. I would fain rest my aching bones and partake of some refreshment, for no food has passed my lips in forty-eight hours."

"Is it possible that you can live so long without eating?"

The missionary pointed to his face and limbs.

"Thou seest what is left of me," he replied, with a smile. "I have been tried in the furnace, yet do I not murmur. What I have suffered is in the Master's service."

There was something sublime in the mild manner and the quiet resignation of the old Quaker.

He was evidently impelled to take up his cross, and he bore it cheerfully.

"That is right, sir," said Willie; "I like to hear a man talk like that."

"My young friend," replied Praise-the-Lord Barebones, "in this country we hold our lives in our hands; but mark me well——"

"Yes, sir."

"The savages may kill me while I am expounding the truths of the gospel, but I will die with the name of the Lord on my lips."

During this conversation they had gradually approached the shore of the lake.

The emaciated mule had followed them with the faithfulness of a dog, so far.

Its strength, however, gave out, and it fell on the ground with a low moan—dead.

The Quaker turned round and patted the animal on the neck.

"Faithful friend," he exclaimed, "thou hast borne the burden and heat of the day. I thank ye."

A tear welled up in the old man's eye, and he brushed it away with the tattered sleeve of his coat.

This was an evidence of feeling that touched Willie greatly.

Boy as he was, he knew how to respect this man, who had shown his devotion to his religion, by leaving the comforts and emoluments of civilization to risk his life among the heathen.

When the lake was reached they embarked in Mona's dugout, and were rowed to his house.

Here Mona's mother and sister had prepared a plentiful repast, consisting of goat's flesh, fish and fowl.

Praise-the-Lord Barebones said grace, and attacked the viands with the appetite of a man who had fasted a long while.

When dinner was over Mona's mother and sister departed for the house of a relative with whom they were staying, so as to make more room for the strangers.

They were both much concerned at the disappearance of Birdie, but they agreed with Monamunza that she had fallen a prey to the Warua, who had been seen in the neighborhood repeatedly of late.

Willie was very much downcast, and confided the cause of his grief to Praise-the-Lord Barebones, who endeavored to console him.

"Rise in the hands of the Lord, and if it pleases Him we will save her," he said.

Taking from his vest-pocket a copy of the Scriptures, he read until it was dark, and having prayed, they all went to sleep.

Early in the morning they were aroused by a shock, which made them spring out of bed.

It seemed as if the house was shaking under them.

"Earthquake!" ejaculated Monamunza.

Shocks succeeded one another in rapid succession.

Vivid flashes of lightning cleft the air, and the thunder reverberated all round.

They ran out to the platform which was in front of the hut, and looked out on the lake.

Its surface was ruffled with large waves, which was most unusual.

Presently the water began to rush toward the westward in a turbulent stream.

What Willie had deemed possible had actually happened.

The shock had broken up the ground and made a passage for the water to flow into the valley.

It was as if a great river ran through the low land and was led by the lake.

The natives in Tipo-Tipo were soon roused by this unusual state of affairs, and they could be seen at their houses, surveying the phenomenon.

That the lake would soon be empty they did not doubt, for it was merely a question of time, and a few of them got into their boats and paddled to the land.

A score or more of natives were crowded together on the shore, when, from behind a clump of palms and acacias, which had been blackened by the grass-fire of the preceding day, came a band of armed men.

"Warua! Warua!" shouted the trembling natives.

They made an ineffectual defense with their spears, but were quickly overpowered, several of their number being slain.

The Warua, with blows and curses, dragged them over the scorched and arid plain, while their heart-rending cries for help struck upon the hearts of their friends like a death-knell, for they were unable to render any assistance.

It it was dangerous to remain in the huts it was equally so to venture on land, for it was impossible to say in what quarter a band of the predatory Warua was hidden.

Lamentation filled the air, and the panic-stricken people stared blankly at one another, as the people of Pompeii may have done when the ashes and scoriæ from Mount Vesuvius began to descend on the devoted city.

A boat containing the chief man of the village and the magician came to Monamunza's hut.

The following conversation ensued between them:

"The spirits are angry with us for having the missionary in our midst. Tell the two white men to leave us alone," said the chief.

"What have they done?" asked Mona.

"They have cast a spell over us."

"No, no; they do not work witchcraft; that is a mistake."

"All the people think so, and the warriors will kill them if they do not leave us."

Mona held a brief conversation with Praise-the-Lord and Willie, which resulted in the latter declaring that they would yield to the wishes of the people and go.

"Tell them," said Praise-the-Lord, "that we will gird up our loins and depart in peace."

This was interpreted to the head man and the magician, and they, apparently satisfied, paddled away to impart the welcome news to the inmates of the various houses.

Very little preparation was necessary, and in ten minutes they were seated in the boat, which Monamunza deftly paddled to the shore.

He shaped his course with the stream, whose force was ever increasing, and landed at the extreme western limit of the lake, where the newly-made river was thundering and rushing over the rocky bed the earthquake had provided for it to the table-land below.

Very singularly enough, it found a basin in which the waters were collected, so that a new lake, five miles off, was, by a natural process, being formed with the waters of the old one.

"We are three," said Monamunza.

This meant that he would not desert Willie and the missionary, but share their fate, whatever it might be.

They thanked him for his self-denying support, and felt that he would be a valuable companion in their wanderings.

During the remainder of the night and the whole of the following day the fugitives remained concealed in a shady place behind some rocks.

The Warua slavers did not trouble them, though there was but little doubt they were lurking in the vicinity to pounce upon any unwary people who quitted their homes.

Toward noon the volume of water had decreased to such an extent that the lake was nearly empty.

Thousands of fish could be seen going down the river, and huge reptiles struggled fruitlessly with the current.

By five o'clock only a sluggish stream rolled down the declivity.

What had been a lake the night before was now only a swampy morass, in which vast quantities of fish gasped and floundered, and innumerable snakes and big eels glided to and fro.

It was impossible now for the Tipo-Tipoans to leave their dwellings in boats, as there was no water for them to float in.

Their situation was pitiable in the extreme.

Soon their provisions would be exhausted; they had no water to drink, and if they attempted to gain the land they would have to wade waist-high in filthy mud, exposed to the attacks of the venomous snakes.

If they remained where they were the sun would soon turn the mud into a putrescent mass. The dead fish and snakes, for they would be killed by the heat and want of water, would create a stench that would breed a pestilence.

Better for them would it have been had they ventured forth in a body when the lake first began to empty itself and forming in a solid body, have given battle to the Warua.

They, however, were panic-stricken by their superstitious dread of the earthquake, and they thought they had propitiated the spirits by driving forth the Christians.

Instead of injuring the latter, they had done them a positive service.

Better was captivity among the Warua, with all its horrors and hardships, than a slow death in the houses in their festering morass.

"The wicked shall perish from off the face of the land," so saith the Lord," exclaimed Praise-the-Lord Barebones, with stern enthusiasm.

It was useless to linger longer round the fearful scene.

The people in the lake-dwellings could be seen wringing their hands, weeping, uttering heart-rending cries, and calling frantically upon their gods to help them.

But no help came.

Some threw themselves in the slimy mud, and were either engulfed and stifled, or stung to death by the snakes.

It was lamentable to witness such horrible suffering when no help could be given.

Monamunza knew that his mother and sister and the friends of his youth were doomed.

He lifted up his voice and wept.

"Let us go," said Praise-the-Lord; "my heart is sick."

"Where shall we travel?" asked Willie.

"I know not. Look! there is a star in the east just risen. Let us journey toward it. It shall be our beacon."

Willie bowed his head in token of acquiescence, and in the cool of the tropical evening they started for fresh scenes, in which they could shut out the horrors they had witnessed.

For some distance the yells and groans of the dying Tipoo-Tipoans rang in their ears.

It was as if they were quitting the Cities of the Plains, which were being overwhelmed by fire from heaven.

Willie's heart was sad and heavy within him.

Would he ever see Birdie Merlin again?

This was the one engrossing thought which filled his mind, to the exclusion of his own forlorn condition.

Time alone could answer that question.

[To be continued.]

"Wandering Willie" was commenced in No. 614.

WILD ROSE AND VIOLET;

Or,

Fun at Mrs. Hawk's.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COUNT ONCE MORE.

CONSTANCE GREY, delighted to see her friends, proposed a water excursion.

The whole party gave their voices unanimously in favor of the sail.

Accordingly, while Constance packed a small hamper, Mr. Reginald Craven, who had a happy knack of dropping in just at the moment he was wanted, and Harry Targent went to engage the punt and the angling apparatus.

The whole party were soon afloat.

"I should like to catch a big fish!" exclaimed Milly.

"A shark, perhaps," suggested Harry Targent, facetiously.

"I always regard a shark as an inhabitant of salt water," returned Milly, "and I think one of that species might be rather too big. All I desire is one that would require some little skill to land. As for those tiresome, gormandizing little gudgeons, there is no credit at all in catching them."

"Well, perhaps the fates will be propitious and send you some fresh-water monster," said Reginald Craven, with a laugh.

They continued to angle, and presently Constance exclaimed, as her line was suddenly drawn close to the side, and apparently under the bottom of the punt:

"Oh, I think I've got hold of something at last!"

"What is it?" cried everybody, eagerly.

"I don't know, I'm sure," returned Constance, as she tugged at her rod, which bent nearly double; "I think it must be a salmon."

"I should scarcely think that," said Reginald; "does he move?"

"No; he seems to have got under the bottom of the boat, and there he lies like a log. See!" she exclaimed, as she jerked her rod several times without its taking any effect upon the dead weight.

"It must be a barbel," remarked Harry Targent, profoundly.

"A basket, more likely," laughed Milly.

"Weeds!" hinted Charles Saville; "or a post, perhaps."

"No, no!" exclaimed Constance, vehemently; "it is none of these. It's a fish, I'm positive; it begins to move."

There was no doubt the tension, caused by the elasticity of the rod, was taking effect.

The fish was getting tired and coming to the surface—that must be it.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Constance, exultingly. "I shall have you now, my gentleman—whatever you are. See, see, it's coming. Stand clear, everybody!"

Everybody stood clear, and with a great splash the prize was hoisted into the punt.

It was, however, an entirely different thing from what had been anticipated, and Constance, in a disappointed tone, exclaimed:

"Somebody's old hat, I declare!"

"So it is," assented everybody, and then, as a matter of course, they burst into a peal of laughter, in which Constance joined as heartily as any one.

"Ha, ha!" she cried; "the idea of mistaking a hat for a fish!"

At this moment a voice hailed them from the bank.

Looking in the direction of the voice, they perceived an individual—hatless—beckoning to them.

"Who is that?" inquired the young ladies.

"The somebody who owns the hat, I should say," returned Reginald; "look at him."

They all looked as the stranger went through some expressive pantomime explanatory of his position.

"He has evidently lost his hat," said Milly, after watching him for a short time, "and wants us to restore it to him."

"Let us approach the bank," suggested Constance.

Accordingly Harry Targent, seizing the pole, propelled the punt in the required direction.

As they drew near, Milly suddenly burst out, excitedly:

"Oh, Con! Rose! do you see who it is?"

"The Count Exile!" cried her companions, with one voice. "Oh, what fun!"

There stood the illustrious exile, shabbier than ever, coolly awaiting the restoration of his property.

As they reached the bank the distinguished individual said, mellifluously:

"You shall *oblige* vis mon *chapeau*, eef you please."

"What! is it you, count?" cried Milly, affecting great surprise.

"Ah, yes, eet ees me," returned the exile, looking scrutinisingly at his questioner.

"How do you do, noble count?" asked Constance. "Have you received your remittances from Paris yet?"

The chevalier opened his eyes very widely, and the past returned to his recollection.

"Aha!" he cried, clasping his hands and striking a picturesque attitude on the bank, "eet ees 'er! my loaf! I see 'er vonce more!" He then kissed his hand to Constance with extreme fervor.

Reginald Craven glared at the dilapidated exile, and felt a strong inclination to thrash him; but Constance whispered a word to him, and he was mollified.

"Is this your hat, count?" inquired Milly, as she held a dripping mass of something black and shining.

"*Hélas*, yes!" the illustrious replied: "I drop 'im off my 'ead overe ze bridge, and 'e float along all six vay. I shall sank you for it."

"It's rather wet," said Constance, as she passed it to him on the point of her rod.

"Oh, *diable!*" he exclaimed, as he contemplated it ruefully; "eet ees frowsy, eet ees rooin!"

After gazing at it for some time, he coolly wrung the water out of it, and swishing it two or three times in the air, placed it jauntily on his head."

"Eet vill dry zere," he remarked.

"You'll catch cold in your head," said Constance.

The exile turned up his eyes dolefully, as he replied:

"Oh, vot mattare vot I catch in my 'ead vhen my 'eart ees broke?"

"Are you going to town, count?" inquired Milly.

"Oh, yes, I am goin' to town," he replied, in a somewhat abstracted tone.

"Then the sooner you start the better," cried Reginald Craven, sternly.

"Yes—ah, yes—yes, I sink so myself," returned the count, as he pensively contemplated a crack in the side of one of his boots. "Ze sole vill drop off my feet, an' I have manee mile to valk; *Adieu!*"

"Let us get out into the stream again, and leave this ragged rascal to his meditations," Reginald said, impatiently; "he's only an impostor!"

The boat beginning to move aroused the count from his abstraction.

"Oh, stay!" he cried, "von moment—jess von!"

"What do you want?" asked Reginald.

"Spare a trifle for a poor exile vich 'ave eet nosing for a long time," was the piteous reply.

"Oh, nonsense!" Reginald muttered, as he dug the pole in the bank to force the boat out into the stream.

"Stay, Regi, one moment," whispered his sweetheart; "this illustrious but unfortunate individual has been a great fund of amusement for us, and we must give him something. Come on, ladies and gentlemen," she continued, aloud, "your contributions are earnestly solicited for a poor foreigner who has neither money nor friends, nor even soles to his boots."

At this solicitation the coins flowed rapidly into the hand held out to receive them, and the silver, being screwed up in a piece of paper, was thrown on to the bank.

The chevalier pounced eagerly upon the packet and tore it open.

"Ha, ha!" he cried, in tones of delight, as he hastily summed up the amount, "fifteen shillin'; oh! I am so much *obliged!* so vares much! now I can get someting to eet, someting to drink; now I can smoke my cigar an' forget my trouble! *Adieu, mes amis! Adieu, belle inamorata!* Ze prayer of ze *pauvre exile* go viz you! Adieu! adieu!"

Having thrice waved his hand and readjusted his drenched *chapeau*, which had suddenly collapsed and fallen over his eyes, the count started off in a high state of exhilaration.

This little episode led Constance to detail the adventures in which the count had played so prominent a part.

Milly then began to feel anxious for the arrival of her brother and Violet.

At half-past seven, exactly, Theodore Westlake and his fair companion reached the gates of River Bank Villa.

A triumphant shout welcomed their arrival, and congratulations poured upon them.

"Bravo, Dore!" cried Milly enthusiastically; "you've managed it capitally. Now we can have a jolly evening all to ourselves!"

And a jolly evening they had, too.

* * * * * *

When the party reached Rose Lodge Mr. and Mrs. Westlake had gone to bed, and Miss Elizabeth Skinner had also retired.

She did not forgive Theodore Westlake.

Between twelve and one o'clock a burst of merry laughter from the lawn reached her ears.

"It's disgraceful! perfectly disgraceful!" she ejaculated, as she hastened to the window and peered eagerly through.

She had extinguished her lamp, and the lawn, bathed in moonlight, and being as light as day, she could see all that transpired without being herself visible.

Milly, Rose and Violet, Charles, Harry and Theodore, absorbed in the joy of the moment, around which the "witching hour of night" shed a fairy-like charm, deported themselves as most lovers under such circumstances have done from time immemorial.

But Elizabeth Skinner, as she watched the lovers, firmly resolved, so far as her power could avail, to put a stop to any such moonlight meetings in future.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

NOR did the determined young lady lose a moment's unnecessary time.

After breakfast, however, she sent a message to Mr. Westlake, senior, requesting to speak to him alone.

Wondering what his anticipated daughter-in-law could have to communicate so privately, Mr. Westlake replied that he should be happy to see her in the parlor.

Miss Elizabeth did not keep him waiting.

Scarcely had he entered the room and closed the door, than it reopened to admit her.

"You wish to speak to me, my dear Miss Skinner?" he said, as he placed a chair for his guest.

"Very much, indeed," returned she, in an offended tone, "and on a matter of great importance."

"I am all attention," responded Mr. Westlake.

Miss Elizabeth commenced in a very decided and business-like manner.

"I wish to remark, Mr. Westlake," she said, "that when the union between your son and myself was proposed to me, I was not aware he had any preposession for another."

"Preposession for another!" he echoed. "You perfectly astound me; he has no preposession; he can have none. You must really be mistaken, my dear girl."

"No, Mr. Westlake, I am not mistaken," replied the dear girl, doggedly.

"Oh, yes, yes; indeed you must be," Mr. Westlake insisted. "When I first introduced the subject of this marriage to him, if he had had any preposession for another, he would undoubtedly have mentioned it at the time."

"I cannot, of course, pretend to say what he might have had then," returned Elizabeth, emphatically, "but one thing is certain—he has now."

"You astonish me," exclaimed Mr. Westlake.

"I was astonished myself, not to say hurt," supplemented Miss Skinner.

"And pray, for whom has he this preposession? Do you know?" inquired the amazed papa.

"Miss Luton," returned the injured Elizabeth, with a burst of indignation.

"Miss Luton," repeated Mr. Westlake, with a laugh of relief; "what! that little golden-haired girl with the blue eyes—Milly's schoolfellow?"

"Yes," replied Elizabeth Skinner, hoarsely and abruptly.

"Oh, no, no!" cried Mr. Westlake, shaking his head at an idea which he could not but look upon as entirely erroneous and absurd. "You're wrong, my dear Miss Skinner, indeed you are. Why, Victoria Luton is a mere child, whom Theodore pets and humors as he would a younger sister. I'm sure it's nothing more."

Elizabeth Skinner gave a short, bitter laugh, and shrugged her shoulders.

"Of course you're at liberty to be as positive as you please, sir," she said; "but child as you call Miss Luton, I think she's very likely to overthrow entirely all the plans you had formed."

"I can't believe it," returned Mr. Westlake; "but I'll take an opportunity of speaking to my son."

"Do so, and if you will be guided by me you will let it be as early as possible."

Miss Skinner took care that these words should be as emphatic as possible; and having uttered them, she quitted the room.

Mr. Westlake remained pondering over what he had heard, and then went and had a consultation with his wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Westlake resolved to speak to Theodore on the subject at once, and a message was sent summoning him to their presence.

Theodore and the young ladies, Miss Skinner excepted, were together when the summons arrived.

To be thus booked for a private interview seemed ominous, but he made light of it and repaired obediently to the drawing-room, where he found his father and mother.

"I want to have a little talk with you, 'Dore," said his sire. "Your time seems so much engrossed just now with our visitors that we scarcely ever meet alone, and I wish to ask you how matters are progressing between Miss Skinner and yourself?"

"Well, father, I don't think they're progressing at all."

"I am sorry to hear this. I expected you were becoming quite friendly, and that your esteem for each other was rapidly increasing——"

"Increasing, father!" interrupted Theodore, petulantly. "Miss Skinner bores me dreadfully—more than any girl I ever met in my life."

"My dear boy, pray don't speak so of our guest, entrusted his father. "Miss Skinner is an accomplished, ladylike girl, and a—a handsome one, of whom any man may be proud."

"I'm sure, then, I don't wish to stand in any one's way," said Theodore, with most amazing generosity; "any one may have her for me."

"But, my dear Theodore," whispered his mother.

"My dear mother," Theodore replied, "Miss Skinner may be very accomplished and ladylike; but with all her mental and personal qualifications I don't like her, and that I think is a very important item in the list of requisites when marriage is the question."

Mrs. Westlake sighed.

Mr. Westlake started up, looking quite angry.

"How is it you never discovered this before?" he asked, sternly.

"Because I had no opportunity of judging Miss Skinner's disposition until she came to visit us, and now she has come I have been able to form an opinion. I've arrived at this conclusion, that the sooner she takes her departure the more agreeable it will be to me," said the young man.

"But," urged Mr. Westlake, in a tone of annoyance, "this match has been talked over between Mr. Flint Skinner and myself until it is looked upon almost as a settled thing, and that you, who have hitherto perfectly acquiesced in the scheme, should suddenly discover a host of imperfections in the young lady, seems to me very unreasonable indeed. In fact, it is very wrong and unfair to Miss Skinner, and you ought to see it in that light, Theodore."

"Well, but I never misled her—never made love to her in the least," argued Theodore.

"But you offered no objection when I proposed her for your wife," retorted his father, very indignantly.

"I know I did not," Theodore admitted; "but then I had not——"

He paused.

"Had not what?" demanded Mr. Westlake, rather sharply.

"No matter, father; I've altered my mind," Theodore answered.

"But these are not cases in which a man is at liberty to change as suddenly as the wind. I suppose you are aware of that?" remarked his father.

Theodore shrugged his shoulders slightly, but made no reply.

"The fact is," continued Mr. Westlake, "I'm inclined to think that you've been flirting in another quarter."

"Flirting, father?" echoed Theodore, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, flirting, sir!" returned Mr. Westlake, indignantly; "of course it is nothing else."

"With whom?" Theodore asked.

"Your sister's schoolfellow, Miss Victoria Luton," his father replied.

Theodore's face flushed slightly; but he replied:

"I am not in the habit of flirting, father; I think a male flirt a very contemptible character; but," he added, earnestly, "most assuredly I should never so trifle with the feelings of the young lady you have mentioned."

The serious tone of the speaker struck his father particularly, and he said, with mingled apprehension and displeasure:

"Surely you haven't been falling in love with her in earnest?"

"I feel far more inclined to fall in love with Miss Luton than Miss Elizabeth Skinner," was Theodore's somewhat evasive reply.

"Then you must control your inclination!" exclaimed Mr. Westlake, imperatively, "and if you have been foolish enough to pay Miss Luton any attentions, I beg that they may cease at once. I don't wonder at Elizabeth complaining of the way you slight her."

"Oh, she has complained then, has she?" asked Theodore.

"Of course she has," returned the father, irritably, "and with reason, I think. A woman does not as a rule like to see the man she expects to marry taking more notice of another than herself."

Theodore muttered some inward ejaculation, and Mr. Westlake took his hat and prepared to leave the room.

"You know very well," he said at parting, "that this marriage is in accordance with the wishes of your mother and myself, and the parents of the young lady, and I shall therefore expect to hear that you have returned to your allegiance."

Theodore, irritated at the idea of his actions and affections being coerced, hurried away to the garden to determine on his future course of conduct.

At one moment he half-resolved to run away with Violet and marry her off-hand, risking all consequences.

But this did not seem quite satisfactory, and he thought subsequently that the keeping up a coolness in his treatment of Miss Skinner would be the most likely way to make her disgusted at the prospect of a union.

While still in a somewhat undecided state of mind, he came upon the fair object of his anxiety.

Violet was sitting on one of the garden-seats, apparently reading, but her thoughts were anywhere but on the page before her.

Theodore was walking on the narrow strip of grass that edged the gravel path; consequently his footsteps made no sound, and Violet did not hear him approaching.

He could, therefore, as he drew near, watch her.

"Dear girl," he murmured, almost unconsciously; "how beautiful, how graceful, how refined she is! like some rare and delicate exotic, whose fair head needs sheltering from the rude blasts of a rough world. Oh, would that I could plant her in my bosom and wear her next my heart for ever!"

Having finished this little rhapsody, he softly drew near, and bending down, whispered gently in her ear:

"A penny for your thoughts."

She turned quickly with a slight start, and the telltale brush that tinged her cheek might, had Theodore been a vain man, have suggested a very flattering answer to his remark.

As it was, she said, with a quiet smile:

"I would not sell them for a thousand pence."

"Indeed! they must be precious, then," continued Theodore; "but I do not believe the author you read has had much share in suggesting them, since your book is upside down."

Violet blushed still deeper at this evident proof of a wandering mind, and exclaimed, in some confusion:

"So it is! What a silly, dreaming creature you must think me, Mr. Theodore."

"I?" returned the young gentleman. "Oh, no, indeed; you were unconscious that you were watched, but I could not break the delightful spell until the wish to speak to you drew me close to your side."

Again Violet blushed as she murmured, bashfully:

"Oh, if I had known you were watching me——"

"Ah, then the spell would have been broken at once," returned Theodore, smiling; "that was why I approached so quietly."

"I—I thought I was alone," said Violet, who evidently felt she had been caught, and spoke a little apologetically; "but it is vain to play hide and seek with you, Mr. Theodore, for somehow you always seem to find me. I wonder how it is?"

"Perhaps the reason why I am more successful in finding you is that I am more in earnest in my search after you than others."

He spoke in a low, almost impassioned tone, and Violet's voice seemed to assimilate in quality as she remarked:

"Earnest seekers deserve to find!"

"And earnest pleaders deserve to win the cause for which they plead! Do you not think so?"

"Yes, that is, if the cause be a good one," replied Violet.

There was a slight pause, during which the two speakers seemed for an instant to be buried in their own thoughts.

What these thoughts were might have been gathered from Violet's downcast eyes and drooping lids, and the unmistakably loving expression with which her companion regarded her.

"Come with me, dear Miss Luton," said Theodore at length, in a persuasive tone. "I cannot say what I wish here; my lips seem fettered."

Theodore's arm encircled her waist and gently urged her to rise.

It needed no diviner's skill to predict the purport of this speech, nor did Violet need much compulsion to induce her to comply with his request.

She experienced that delightful prescience which informed her that the moment—that all important moment to woman when she loves, was at hand, when she should hear the words she most longed, and yet almost feared to listen to.

A MOTHER'S HEROISM.—MRS. KEATH, OF LEACHVILLE, OREGON, HAVING BROKEN A LIMB, LEADS A HORSE CARRYING HER CHILDREN TWO MILES THROUGH THE SNOW TO A NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE.

THE STORY OF BUST AND TOUT PETIT.—TOUT PETIT ASSUMES THE OFFICE OF PAPER-CARRIER.

THE STORY OF BUST AND TOUT PETIT.—TOUT PETIT IS PERPLEXED BY THE BOX PUT UP TO RECEIVE THE PAPER.

THE STORY OF BUST AND TOUT PETIT.—HE CONSULTS WITH HIS FRIEND BUST, AND TOGETHER THEY CAPTURE A NEIGHBOR'S NEWSPAPER.

THE STORY OF BUST AND TOUT PETIT.—WHICH BEING DISCOVERED, TOUT PETIT IS RESTRAINED BY THE APPLICATION OF RED TAPE.

As she rose from her seat she looked up in Theodore's face and said, inquiringly:

"Where do you wish me to come?"

"I will show you," he replied, "if you will put yourself under my guidance."

His fostering arm was thrown around her and his clear blue eyes, honest and loving, looked down fell into hers.

To hesitate was impossible.

"I will come wherever you please," she said, confidingly, as they walked away.

"And wherever that is I will follow!" hissed a venomous, softfeatured voice as the lovers disappeared.

The bushes parted, and Elizabeth Skinner, pale with jealous rage, burst from the covert where she

IN THE TIGER'S JAWS.—"BEFORE A THOUGHT OF THE CREATURE'S INTENTION HAD TIME TO FLASH THROUGH MY MIND, I WAS DOWN UNDER HIS PAWS."

had been concealed, and cautiously followed the unsuspecting pair.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A LOVE SCENE.

THEODORE conducted Violet to a beautifully secluded spot in the garden where the branches of shrubs surrounded them and united over their heads in dense luxuriance.

In this leafy bower all was secluded and still.

The noon-day sun could not penetrate the cool retreat, and the twittering of the feathered songsters over their heads was the only sound that reached them.

Here, then, they seated themselves, and for a few moments remained silent, enjoying the tranquil beauty of the spot.

Then Theodore said:

"I am going to ask you a riddle. What is that which is instantaneous in its growth, and which never dies? Can you guess?"

Violet pondered deeply, not because she could not solve the proposition put to her, but because she dared not utter the Little word of four letters that trembled on her tongue.

So she seemed to be very deeply ruminating, like a deceptive little thing as she was, until her fair face grew quite serious from the imaginary mental exercise she was undergoing.

Theodore watched her from a corner of his eye with a quiet smile, and at length he said, in a tone of feigned surprise at her slowness of perception:

"Can you not guess my riddle?"

She made no direct reply, but repeated it thoughtfully to herself:

"What is that which is instantaneous in its growth and which never dies?"

Then came another pause.

"I am sure it is!" exclaimed Theodore, fervently; "quite sure!"

"You believe in love at first sight, then?" Violet inquired, rather timidly.

"Oh, yes, yes. I believe in it profoundly! It is the only love I do believe in; that love which vegetates slowly, little by little, and makes months or years coming to perfection, is in my opinion nothing but a miserable apology, after all. My motto with respect to love is 'at once and for ever!'"

Violet could not resist one more question, though her voice faltered a little as she proposed it.

"Do you speak from your own experience?" she asked, her heart almost standing still as she did so.

"I do, indeed, or I could not speak so confidently," Theodore replied, throwing as much love as possible into his tone and look; "if ever there was a perfectly satisfactory case of 'love at first sight,' mine was the case. I looked, I loved!"

Poor Violet had almost reached the climax of her anxiety, and stood metaphorically trembling on the very brink of uncertainty, the balance equally poised.

Hope on one side, fear on the other; but the suspense was only for another instant, for Theodore went on, his voice subsiding into a deeper, tenderer, and more impassioned tone, as he asked:

"And whose eyes, think you, produced this sudden and lasting effect upon my heart? I'm sure you can guess that!"

Violet made a very bungling effort at duplicity as she almost gasped out:

"M—Miss Skinner's, I sup——"

Before she could finish the sentence, Theodore impetuously repelled the unbearable idea.

Miss Skinner!" he almost shouted; "no, no, my darling girl! not her eyes, but yours! yours, my sweet one!"

If ever one anxious bosom was animated with joy at this welcome assurance it was Violet Leigh's.

And, reversing the picture, if ever another equally anxious was filled to overflowing with the bitter draught of jealous disappointment, it was that of Elizabeth Skinner, who, with clinched hands and features distorted with passion, had just heard the intelligence that felt like a blight on all her prospects, and who now stood glaring fiercely through the branches at the inmates of the bower.

But her presence was not even suspected, and Theodore Westlake, having broken the ice, continued with all the excited fervor of youth and love.

"I loved you the very first moment I saw you," he said, fervently, at length, as though never tired of assuring her of this fact. "Do you believe me?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Violet, with a sweetly-assuring smile on her glowing features, "for it was exactly my own case."

"What!" cried her delighted and enraptured wooer, "do you really mean that you love—I mean, took a fancy to—to me when we first met?"

"I did, indeed," was Violet's murmured answer, as she hid her blushing face on his shoulder. "It was with me as with you—'love at first sight.'"

It would be impossible to describe the ecstasy into which this sweetly candid confession threw Theodore Westlake.

So completely was he absorbed in it, that he could think of nothing else.

Even the earnest admonitions of this father which he had so lately listened to were entirely forgotten.

His heart was gone, and having given that, he was on the verge of making an offer of his hand, when suddenly he heard his mother's voice calling him.

The sound acted as a temporary check to his excitement, and he started to his feet, almost expecting to see his maternal relative looking in upon him through the branches of his leafy retreat.

He remained listening in some little embarrassment and doubt as to whether he should go or stay, but as the voice still continued to call, he said to Violet:

"It is my mother calling me, darling; I shall not be gone long."

And with a parting kiss, which he deemed it necessary to leave behind to console her till he came back again, he hastened to obey his mother's summons.

Violet, left alone, relapsed into one of her dreamy reveries. But this time there were no sad thoughts to cloud her meditations. All was a delicious *coleur de rose*, with which the future seemed bathed in a glow of brightness such as it had never been before.

She little knew how near one was to her now, more than ever determined—if a strong will and bitter hate could accomplish her purpose—to dash the cup of joy untasted from her rival's hand.

This one was Elizabeth Skinner, who, tortured beyond the bounds of endurance at what she had seen and heard, having watched Theodore Westlake till he was out of sight, burst from her concealment like a fierce hawk upon her gentle, timid prey.

Violet, believing it to be her lover returned, started up impulsively to meet him. Her dismay may be imagined when, instead she encountered the flashing eyes and hate-distorted visage of the jealous Elizabeth.

The latter at once grasped her by the wrist, and in a stern, hard tone exclaimed, with sarcastic bitterness:

"You did not expect to see me here, I know. Come with me—I must speak with you."

But Violet had sufficient presence of mind to reply:

"Can we not speak here?"

"We could do so, certainly," was the cold reply; "but is my wish that we should not." She tightened her grasp upon the fragile wrist of her fair prisoner as she added: "You have been here too long already. Come now with me."

Violet, for more reasons than one, thought it better to comply, and without offering any further objections, suffered herself to be led to a more distant and secretly secluded part of the garden.

"What could Elizabeth Skinner want with her?" she thought, as she went along. "What was she about to hear?"

[To be continued.]

"Wild Rose and Violet" was commenced in No. 641.

THE STORY OF BUST AND TOUT PETIT.

A WEALTHY French lady, residing on Park Avenue, between Bryant and Brannan Streets, San Francisco, owns a cunning little dog, which she facetiously named Tout Petit. He is a ratter, but when rats are scarce he takes to munching sugar as naturally as a country schoolgirl takes to crushing peanuts or a modern preacher to piety. The lady takes the *Chronicle*, which is thrown in the yard by the carrier, as is common. The ratter is up every morning at daylight to watch for the carrier, and, as soon the paper is thrown in, he takes possession of it, watching his treasure with the utmost fidelity.

When his mistress opens the door Tout Petit rushes up the front stairs with the *Chronicle* in his mouth and places it at the feet of the lady. Then commences a vigorous wagging of the caudal appendage and an appealing look from the eyes, which is sweet enough to mean sugar, and so Tout Petit is rewarded with a nice lump of snow-white sugar.

He retires gracefully and indulges in his "morning nip" with the utmost *sang froid*. But dogs, like men, will sometimes meet with misfortune, and great were the misfortunes of Tout Petit for a while.

His mistress had a box made for the reception of her favorite morning paper, and this little fact cut off the supplies of the ratter. He was disconsolate for a while, for, after vainly trying to hunt up the *Chronicle*, he apparently gave up the chase in disgust. And now comes the astonishing part of the story.

The next neighbor of the lady is a French gentleman, prominently connected with the press of this city. He is the owner of a splendid hunting dog named Bust. When misfortune fell upon Tout Petit it is very evident that he went to Bust for consolation.

The canine Damon and Pythias got their heads together, and concocted a most adroit scheme by which the sugar supply would be again forthcoming. It nearly borders on the marvelous, for its inception and practical carrying out could not be surpassed by two intelligent human beings.

The way they did it was for Bust to go in advance, almost at daylight, followed by Tout Petit, and make a reconnoissance. Having discovered a *Chronicle* lying inside a gate Bust would jump and open the gate, when his little companion would rush in and gobble the paper. Both dogs would then scamper back to the lady's house, wagging their tails and snuffling to each other, as if to say, "Didn't we do that up handsomely?"

Mrs. ——, finding that Tout Petit was bringing the *Chronicle* as usual, was utterly astonished, but nevertheless rewarded him with a sugar-plum. The little rascal, not unlike some human beings, was very selfish, and would not share his booty with Bust; but the latter, like some other human beings, was as generous and unselfish as ever. After a while complaints about some thief stealing the *Chronicle* from subscribers on Park Avenue became quite frequent, and a watch was set to capture him.

The thieves, of course, were quickly discovered, and the *modus operandi* became the talk of the town in that locality. The subscribers who had lost their papers so frequently, upon discovering the thieves, put up with the past inconveniences without a murmur, laughing over the matter as the best joke of the season.

But the discovery brought another misfortune upon poor Tout Petit, for the little trickster is now limited to a certain amount of red tape, beyond the limits of which, like a gouty diplomat, he cannot go. He is occasionally visited by his friend Bust, when they seem to hold the most serious confabs about the vicissitudes of dog life in San Francisco.

A MOTHER'S HEROISM.

ONE of the most remarkable instances of maternal devotion and courage ever recorded is told of Mrs. Keath, a poor woman living a few miles from Leachville, Oregon. One night recently, after a heavy snowstorm, she set out on horseback with her two little children on her return from a day's visit to her nearest neighbor, two miles away from her own house. Just as they had arrived home, the horse on which the trio were riding stipped and fell, dismounting the riders and breaking one of Mrs. Keath's legs. There being no one in the house, and the extreme youthfulness of the children rendering them unable to assist the suffering woman, she, writhing in pain and shivering with cold, crawled to the shed where the horse had gone, took the halter in her mouth, and led the beast to a wagon, where she assisted the children to mount. She then crawled on her hands and knees for two miles through deep snow and pelting storm, leading the horse on which the children were seated, and arrived, late at night, suffering intense agony from her broken leg, at the house of the neighbor which she had left early in the evening. Had not the brave woman been capable of enduring extreme hardships it is more than likely that she and the children would have frozen to death.

CHARACTER is like cloth. If white, it can be dyed black; but once blackened, it cannot be dyed white.

IN THE TIGER'S JAWS.

ONE of the indefatigable race of British sportsmen, Mr. John Bradley, has recently published a most entertaining narrative of travel and sport in Burmah, Siam, and the Malay Peninsula, a region hitherto wholly unexplored by European Nimrods.

The author's miraculous escape from the jaws of a tiger, near Shallangat, in Burmah, is thus described:

At Shallangat we were informed that wild elephants and tigers, as well as deer and wild boars, were numerous in the adjoining forests, and we determined to have a day or two's sport before leaving the place.

We were up and ready for action by four o'clock,

IN THE TIGER'S JAWS.—"IN AN INSTANT, AND WITH A TERRIBLE ROAR, THE CREATURE POUNCED UPON ME, SEIZING ME THIS TIME BY THE SHOULDER."

having engaged two of the village shikarees the preceding night. They put in an appearance punctually, but accompanied by fifty or sixty of the villagers to serve as beaters. As we felt quite competent to beat up our own game, and only required guiding to the spot where it was to be found, we gave these gentry to understand that if they went we should expect to have their services gratuitously, especially as we were doing them a favor in helping to rid the country of a great pest.

The hint was sufficient. Finding they had nothing to expect in the way of reward, they declined to expose their precious persons, and fell away to their business, two or three at a time.

Striking off almost due south, we followed a narrow footpath through a dense fog where daylight was nearly excluded, our native huntsmen leading the way.

The trees were at least a hundred and fifty feet in height, and matted together with gigantic creepers, bearing flowers of most gorgeous colors and patterns.

After four miles or so, we made a direct turn to the left, and shortly afterwards emerged from the forest on to a jungle-covered plain of considerable extent.

Patches of bamboo thicket were here numerous, and afforded, our guide said, a usual lurking-place for tigers and boars. We accordingly made dispositions for the attack, ranging the shikarees and servants—of whom we had brought four with us besides Akbar, and Laoo (my own servant)—in a line with intervals, and placing ourselves near the centre.

Advancing slowly, we beat every patch of long grass and clump of bushes that was large enough to conceal any animal of size. The first game started was a large boar, which made off at a great rate, and was speedily followed by two more of its

IN THE TIGER'S JAWS.—"THE TIGER SHOOK ME AS A DOG SHAKES A RAT, AND THEN DRAGGED ME AT A TREMENDOUS RATE THROUGH THE THICK UNDERGROWTH OF THE FOREST."

IN THE TIGER'S JAWS.—"A HEAVY WEIGHT FELL ACROSS ME, AND THEN I COMPREHENDED THAT MY BRAVE FRIEND, GRANT, WAS PULLING ME FROM UNDER THE DEAD BODY OF THE TIGER."

disturbed companions. We did not interfere with them, our object being to shoot tigers, of which we began to feel there were not so many in the neighborhood as our guide had represented.

After three hours' fatiguing work we had reached the eastern extremity of the plain, and found ourselves amongst some low hillocks, fairly sprinkled over with large trees, and covered with tall rank grass, where we made a halt for rest and refreshments.

In the afternoon we continued our march, but with no signs of being likely to meet with sport, and about four o'clock we turned toward our camp. We marched along carelessly, without observing order or caution, and were not prepared to take advantage of Akbar's warning, when he exclaimed,

"Beware, sahh!" and a full-grown tiger went past us at a gal op.

A straggling volley was fired after it, and, though evidently not struck, the beast stopped, and, rearing itself up on its hind legs, clawed the bark of a tree, just as a cat scratches the leg of a chair or table.

Mr. Grant and myself fired simultaneously, but without effect, and, before a thought of the creature's intention had time to flash through my mind, I was down under its paws.

Seizing me by the left thigh, the tiger shook me as a dog shakes a rat, and then, growling horribly, dragged me at a tremendous rate through the thick undergrowth of the forest. I heard the frightened shouts of my companions and the reports of several shots, and then a dizziness came over me; but I did not lose consciousness. As I was jolted through the forest I several times caught hold of the trees, but the tiger, growling fiercely, shook me free in an instant.

All this time, though quite calm and collected, I felt a strong desire to preserve my existence, and never for a moment experienced that apathy with regard to my danger that some persons have described under similar circumstances.

How long I was in the jaws of this brute I cannot tell. It seemed to me an age before the creature stopped. My companions afterward declared that I had been dragged at least half a mile from the spot where I was first seized. They followed as fast as they could run, and, though I was unaware of it at the time, never lost sight of the beast. To this circumstance I undoubtedly owe my life; for had there been any delay in rendering me assistance, it must have been fatal to me.

The moment the tiger halted it released my thigh, and seemed to be attracted by the approach of my companions, though, as yet, I did not see them myself. Taking advantage of this release, I tried to creep to the shelter of some tall bushes near at hand.

In an instant, and with a terrible roar, the creature pounced upon me, seizing me this time by the shoulder, and at the same time lacerating my chest with its claws. A shot was fired, and I heard the bullet whistle overheard. Fear of killing me had caused them to fire too high. A second and third shot were equally unsuccessful, and the tiger, again releasing me, began to lick up the blood which oozed through my jacket.

I began to feel very faint, and could not suppress a groan. Several times the tiger dabbed his paws, apparently in play, about my face, but did not use its claws, fortunately for me. Presently the beast seemed to be seized with a sudden rage, and commenced to spit, like an angry cat, at some one approaching, whose footsteps I could hear, but I could not see him, owing to my position, for I was lying flat on my back. There was the sharp bang of a rifle close to my head, a heavy weight fell across me, and then I comprehended that my brave friend, Grant, was pulling me from under the dead body of the tiger.

Captain Lacy and some of the others came up and proceeded to stanch the flow of blood from my wounds, which were by no means worst injury. The flesh was bitten and torn to such an extent that the bone was visible. The wounds on the chest were also severe; but my shoulder was not much injured.

When the bleeding was stopped I fainted, and, upon recovering consciousness, found I was being carried along upon a rough litter formed of boughs. I suffered great pain, especially in the leg, and was exceedingly thankful when we arrived at our camping-place.

As soon as the news spread about Shallangat that a tiger had been slain, the people came crowding round our tent to see it. The hubbub they created was horrible. There was shouting, singing, beating of tomtoms and drums, blowing of reeds, dancing and exulting over the dead animal. In my weak state the noise was particularly irritating; and as it was in vain to appeal to the sympathies of these people, the dead beast was removed to a distance, where the rejoicing continued nearly all night.

The following day fever had set in, and toward midday I became delirious. With a few lucid intervals, I was in this state for five days.

Although my companions, both experienced Indian sportsmen, abandoned all hope of my recovery—a belief in which they were confirmed by the unanimous opinion of our native servants—I managed to pull through after much suffering, and on November 20th, just a month after the catastrophe, I was again able to mount my horse and resume our journey.

THREE BOYS.

A Story of a High School.

By WILLIAM O. STODDARD.

CHAPTER XI.

PAT NOLAN'S first intimate acquaintance with the woodpile began that very Saturday morning. Two great wagon-loads of "four feet sticks" of maple, beech, oak, and hickory, came in from Mrs. Porrance's farm and were pitched over into the backyard, just behind the hen-house.

"You needn't cord it up," said Mrs. Porrance, as Pat stood ruefully looking at it. "Black Sam 'll be here in a few minutes to saw it. You can split for a while. I'll soon be ready to have the wood-house full before cold weather sets in. Splitting wood is good exercise for boys."

Pat did not exactly dislike the idea of swinging an ax, though he would very much have preferred fishing, if he could have had a choice. He was glad, however, that the sawbuck business was to fall to the share of Black Sam.

That sable gentleman soon came limping into the yard, with the rough tools of his trade on his shoulders.

"Mornin' to ye."

"Good-morning," replied Pat.

"Mighty fine load oh wood. Doesn't get such wood nowadays as we used ter. Den it was all hick'ry and maple. Nebber heard oh anything else. Golly! dey had fireplaces dar. Didn't saw and split dar wood into kindlin's. Dey just burned de logs whole. Dem was de times foh me, sah."

And Sam whacked down his sawbuck, put a stick on it, put his "game" leg on that, and began to ply his saw as if he had a spite against that particular piece of timber.

No sooner had he sawed off a short length than Pat seized upon it, and began to attack it with the ax he had picked up in the woodhouse.

"Look o' heah!" shortly exclaimed Sam, as he ceased the motion of his sawing, "my desh young friend and fellah-trabber, jist you git a leetle furder away wid dat ax. I doesn't want my head split open. Not jist yet. I isn't good enough to go, I isn't."

Pat blushed at such a comment on his skill, but he moved away, and Sam vouchsafed him much advice in the management of his heavy tool as rendered his own toes also a good deal safer than they otherwise might have been.

"It's a mercy I wasn't brung up in de city," remarked Sam. "I moughtn't not hab knowed any more'n you do. I isn't a bit proud, I isn't. Is you g'wine to de cadmy?"

"Yes; that's what I came for."

"Den you's lucky to git a chance to larn how to split wood at de same time. Oh, but wouldn't ye spile a saw quick!"

Very likely; but Pat watched the black expert that day until he thought he knew something about it.

It was easy work with most of that wood, but now and then Pat came upon a knot that puzzled him.

He was hard at it on one of these tough customers when he heard Mrs. Porrance from the kitchen doorway:

"That'll do, Pat. That's enough for once." And when he came in she added, "Now you may go to your room and your books for a while."

"I'm going to write a letter to my mother," said Pat.

"That's a good boy. Tell her you're well and happy, and that you won't waste any of your precious time in idleness."

"I'll tell her I'm learning to split wood," dryly retorted Pat.

"That's nothing to what you'll learn before Spring. But you've done very well for a green hand."

Pat was anxious to get at his letter, for he had a world of things to tell. It was the first letter he had ever written, except in his public-school exercises, and he gave his whole mind to it. There was no danger but what it would prove a good one in the loving eyes that were to read it.

After it was done, however, Pat had a yet more difficult task. He had made up his mind to pen a letter of thanks to Doctor Becker and Katrina, and that was a very different thing from writing to his own mother.

He spoiled sheet after sheet of paper in a somewhat extravagant sort of way. Dinner-time came and he was still at it. At the table both Mrs. Porrance and her daughter had questions to ask him, and Almira did not confine herself to his lessons, as her mother did.

She even asked him about the little girl whose life he had saved.

That unloosed Pat's tongue wonderfully, and may have helped him afterward with his letter, but he wound up with:

"Doctor Becker gave me all my books. He gave me the one you are reading."

"There, Almira," remarked Mrs. Porrance, "I was wondering where you got it. So it's Patrick's!"

"Oh, she's welcome to it——"

"Well, all I want to say is, it mustn't go out of the house."

"Jenny Treadwell——"

"Jenny can't have it, then, nor anybody else. Tell her I said so. I don't intend Pat's books shall go wandering round the village. He doesn't keep a circulating library."

Pat kept still, but he was by no means sorry to hear it, for his mind had troubled him a little on that head.

When he got back to his room he was not disturbed again for a long time, and his letter to Doctor Becker was finally completed, after a fashion. It did not exactly please Pat's notions, but it was a creditable performance, all things considered.

He scarcely knew what time it was when Mrs. Porrance called him again, into the dining-room. There was a large, covered basket on the table, and she held out to him a folded paper.

"That's my list for the grocery. All you have to do is to hand it in at Calkins & Mugger's, and bring home what they give you. It will be quite a burden, but you are strong enough."

"I guess so," said Pat, as he picked up the basket. "Where are Calkins & Mugger?"

"Up the street. Three squares beyond the green. It's quite a little distance, but you can take your time going to it."

So Pat took his basket, and then he took his time.

It was really the first good look he had had at the beauties of Bunkerville, undisturbed by any load on his mind greater than an order for groceries.

He kept his eyes busy, and he made up his mind that there were more of boys and girls, of all sizes, than there was of any other sort of village.

The boys, particularly, seemed quite numerous, but none of them troubled him with more than a sharp and curious glance or so, on his way to Calkins & Mugger's. He found things there a tribe busy, so was apt to be the case on a Saturday afternoon, and when his turn came to be served he quickly made up his mind that Mrs. Parrance must have been nearly out of everything when he and his friends arrived.

Such a succession of different packages—none of them very large, to be sure—he had never before seen tied up for one customer. No, not even by Mr. Maguire himself.

"He'd like her for a steady one," muttered Pat to himself, as he took his well-filled basket on his arm and urged it out into the street.

It had never occurred to him that he was in any peril of interference in broad daylight.

Such a thing would have been impossible in the great city he had come from, where what are known as the "dangerous classes" take quite another time of day for their operations.

Scarcely had he trudged half way back to the corner of the village green with his load, however, before he found himself confronted by half a dozen boys of various sizes, none of whom he had ever seen before, so far as he could remember.

"That's him, Bob."

"Mother Porrance's brand-new Irish boy!"

"Hello, red-head! what have you got in your basket?"

"If he belongs to the academy, so does his basket."

"It's his lunch, I guess."

"Give us a look at it, will ye?"

A perfect storm of remarks, questions, demands, mingled with what were meant for jokes, poured upon poor Pat, who had never in all his life before felt himself so completely alone.

He was a stranger in a strange land, with a big basket on his arm, and he scarcely knew what to do about it.

His first impulse was to back up against the nearest fence and put down his basket.

"You mind your own business and I'll mind mine," he said, as he did so, and with a deepening color in his face.

"Hullo, Joe, if Paddy isn't showing fight!" exclaimed Bob Hinckley.

"We'll hustle him. Go for his basket. We owe Mother Porrance a good turn."

So they did, the ungrateful lubbers! but her refusal to receive them again had not pleased them over well. Their present malice was directed even more against their former landlady than even the raw Irish boy from the city.

Against any one, or even two, of his tormentors, Pat could have made a respectable show of defense; but he could do little to stop the sudden rush that now swept over him, although he struck out right and left, with a good deal more force and promptness than had been counted on.

Bob and Joe and their friends had expected something more like a game of "pull away," and their numbers and strength were likely to carry the day.

Down went Pat, and over went his basket.

It looked as if Mrs. Porrance was in a fair way to hear a poor account of her new boy's first errand, when there came a sudden change in the aspect of affairs.

Bob Hinckley was shouting "Hurra, boys! Down with the Paddy!" when he felt his legs suddenly jerked out from under him, and he rolled over and over on the grass, followed by his brother and then by one, two, three, four of their crowd.

Something very like a small mob seemed suddenly to have gathered, and there was Van Rivington and Sol Rogers helping Pat gather his scattered cargo, while a big, brawny chap, whom the boys recognized as the stage-driver who had brought them over, was growling between his teeth:

"Down wid the Paddy, is it, ye dirrty spalpeens? Av ye was owaly a bit bigger I'd break ivery bone of yiz."

"What business is it of yours, any way?" began Bob, rubbing his left knee.

"Me name's Denis Mullaly, and I'm from Limerick——"

"Oh, it's all right, Bob," interrupted Sol Rogers; "we only came in for our share of the fun. Give him back his things and let him go home."

"Yes," added Van; "fun is fun, but they ought not to keep anything."

"Keep anything!" shouted Bob. "Do you mean to call me a thief?"

"Or me?" roared Joe.

"Or me?"

"Or me?" added their friends, in chorus.

"No, of course not," said Van, quietly. "But what made you put Mrs. Porrance's things in your pockets?"

"It won't do, Robert," said Sol. "Doctor Betts is awfully down on stealing."

A keen twinkle in Pat Nolan's eyes showed that a hint had been given him, but he said nothing.

"Stealing! Pockets!" shouted Bob Hinckley, as he thrust his hands in his own.

"Pull 'em out," said Van. "You can't get away with it this time. That's it. What's that package, Pat?"

"Thim's the raisins, I reckon."

"Raisins, eh? So, Bob, you got the raisins, did you?" said Van. "Well, hand 'em over. Did you get anything else? Hello, what's that?"

"That's the alum!" shouted Pat.

"There, if this isn't fun!" exclaimed Denis Mullaly, while unlucky Bob Hinckley looked as if he would like to sink into the ground.

But it was now his brother's turn.

"Come, Joe," said Sol Rogers, "hand over. Empty your pockets. Let's see how much you got. You are a great griet to me, Joseph."

"If he didn't freeze to the starch," said Pat. "The saleratus, too!"

"Now, you pag-nosed chap," said Van, to another of the hustlers, "out with your stealings."

"There's the Castile soap! And that other one's turned up the cloves!"

And the gathering mob of bystanders joined in the yell of derision that burst from the now triumphant Pat Nolan.

"You're a nice lot," said Van Rivington, solemnly. "I'll let you up this time, but if you ever interfere with Pat again, or Mrs. Porrance's grocery-basket——"

"I didn't take 'em!" howled Bob Hinckly. "It's all a frand!"

"Go home, Robert," said Sol Rogers, with a mocking grin on his not very handsome face. "I won't tell your folks about it. You and Joseph are young yet. Reform!"

The Hinckley boys, and everybody else, for that matter, knew there was some "sell" about it, but just how it had been worked was too much for them.

The jeering as they sneaked away was something they were not likely to forget very soon.

Pat Nolan had now restored his treasures to their proper place and picked up his basket.

"We'd help you," said Van, "but we've got basket enough of our own."

"You had some luck, then?"

"Tiptop," said Sol; "and you ought to have seen Van swim. He'll beat either one of us one of these days."

"If I ever do," said Van, "I'll spend my time on the ferry-boats till I get a chance to save somebody."

"Try a small girl first," said Sol; "they're easier than big ones."

"They're worth saving, too," said Pat, as he thought of Katrina Becker's bright face and golden hair.

"Yes," laughed Sol; "you can get books for it."

Sol was a little ashamed of that remark when he got to the house, for Mrs. Porrance told him, as soon he came in, that an express package for him had arrived by the afternoon stage, and, while Pat was making his report of his somewhat stirring adventures, the other two boys hurried to explain.

"From your folks, most likely," said Van.

"No, it isn't," replied Sol, as he picked up the long and somewhat heavy package. "It's from the city."

It was opened in a twinkling.

"A leather gun-case!"

"And a gun in it."

"And all the fixings, ammunition and all. What a splendid double-barrel!"

Then it was, and with it a very nicely-worded letter of gratitude from Doctor and Mrs. Becker and little Katrina.

"How did he know anything about my symptoms?" exclaimed Sol. "It takes a doctor for that. It's the very prescription I needed."

"Hope it'll do you good," said Van. "I feel more like swimming than I ever did before. It's a grand, good gun."

CHAPTER XII.

PAT NOLAN watched with special interest while Mrs. Porrance compared the contents of the basket with her written memorandum.

"All right," she said, at last. "But how did so much dirt get on the papers?"

Pat had no objection whatever to give an account of his trip to the grocery, and he did it in a way that was closely listened to by his landlady and her daughter—that is, he told it capitally well.

"The young vagabonds!" exclaimed Almira. "They ought to be flogged!"

"Oh, they didn't really steal 'em," said Pat. "I guess that was Van's work. They didn't know when the papers were put in their pockets."

"Served 'em right," said Mrs. Porrance. "The whole village 'll be laughing at them. They're bad boys, Pat, and you must look out for them."

"I'll do that same; but they'll be letting me alone for a bit."

"No, they won't. They'll never forgive either of you for getting the laugh on them. They tormented Sol last year."

"Troth, and they'll have a good time tormenting any one this year. There's three of us, now."

"That makes a difference, I must say. Sol Rogers never brought home anything like so many fish before."

"I can clane fish."

"We'll have them for breakfast. Put the basket in the kitchen."

Just then they were startled by a loud report of a gun, that seemed to be almost over their heads, accompanied by a sound of smashing glass and a loud exclamation.

"Mercy on us!" screamed Almira; but Mrs. Porrance was out of the door and on her way upstairs almost as quickly as Pat himself. "Oh, I hope nobody's killed!"

"Nonsense, Almira! I only want to know what those boys are up to now."

The widow's nerves were good. There was no doubt of that.

"Oh, Mrs. Porrance," shouted Sol, as she entered the room, "look at my new gun!"

"Look at my broken window. What did you fire through it for?"

"I didn't mean to shoot. Van had put a cartridge in to try it, and I snapped the trigger, so it went off."

"You might have aimed at an open window, then. It isn't safe to let children have guns. They belong to men, who can take care of them."

Perhaps she did not understand boys, and then perhaps she did.

"Children, indeed!"

Sol and Van looked at one another with flushed faces. They were both vowing hard not to have any more accidents with gunpowder.

Then Mrs. Porrance examined the gun.

"I guess it's safe not to burst," she said, quietly. "I'll show you how to use it. Is it the first you ever saw?"

"Mrs. Porrance," responded Sol, with an effort at dignity, "I was born on the fourth of July, and I know all about guns. I can hit a window at six feet."

"I see you can. You can pay for mending it, too. I'm glad you didn't shoot Van Rivington. It wouldn't be so easy to mend him."

That was a pretty serious thought, and there was little danger of any more carelessness in handling Doctor Becker's present.

Now, however, the story had to come out. Almira had somewhat hesitatingly ventured into the room, and Van told the whole thing, as he had seen it from the ferry-boat.

"I thought it was all Pat's doing," said the widow. "Well, Sol, you earned your gun. I'll forgive you this time. Never mind about the window. Only you mustn't break any more. Almira, let's go down and get supper. I don't believe they could swim ashore with a grown-up child like you."

It looked as if she had small sympathy for her daughter's nervousness, real or pretended, and she left the boys to a further examination of the gun.

They were careful not to put in any more cartridges.

"I don't care," said Sol; "it's the first breech-loader I ever handled."

And it smashed that pane of glass beautiful," exclaimed Pat.

Both he and Van were contriving plans of their own for the acquisition of some sort of shooting-iron. The latter decided upon making a strong appeal to his father, but he doubted the success of it. But what Mr. Rivington was ready to give his boy anything in season, but Mrs. Rivington's delicate health was in the way of some things. She was nervously afraid of firearms, and it would never do to have her imagining accidents to her darling. Van knew that, too, and he would not have given his mother a moment's anxiety for the world.

"Father has never forbidden my having a gun," he said to himself, "and I know he used to be a sportsman. I'm not sure but what he'd like it first-rate. I'll write to him, anyway."

That was the correct thing to do. Van was not the sort of a boy to hide anything, and those are the boys who generally have very little that needs hiding. They can look everybody straight in the eyes all their lives.

As for Pat, such a gun as Sol's was out of the question for him, of course, but there were others to be had, and he solidly made up his mind to have one.

Take it all around, their first Saturday in Bunkerville was a great day for those three boys, and so it had been, in a different way, for Bob and Joe Hinckley and their friends.

While Mrs. Porrance's boarders were examining Doctor Becker's present, the other lot were discussing the very remarkable manner in which they had been jerked away from their victim, as well as the deep mystery of all those things having been found in their pockets.

"Denis Mullaly helped 'em."

"We'll shoot peas at his horses."

"We must get even with him, somehow."

"But he's awful strong. I heard a man say he was the strongest fellow he ever knew."

"That's from driving four-in-hand."

"I tell you what, boys, that Van Rivington's a cute fellow."

"We've got to look out for him."

"We must give him a lesson, first thing. Teach him his place."

"Can't have any white-fingered city chap cutting up shines here!"

"We're beat for to-day, anyhow," finally remarked Bob.

"That's a fact," said Joe. "Don't I wish I knew how they did it?"

"Oh, it was easy enough, while we were all tumbling around on the grass."

"Well, Bob, we'll all tumble around again, and you see how many things you can put in our pockets while we're tumbling."

That was scarcely fair, since they would now be looking out for tricks, and Bob did not see fit to try it.

Meantime, however, the story had traveled everywhere, Denis Mullaly himself having taken a special delight in telling it to as many as he could.

He told it at Calkins & Mugger's, at the livery-stable, at the tavern, and wherever he told it to carried it somewhere else, and it grew as it went, until it became the biggest kind of a story.

So Bob and Joe discovered, as they walked along toward the house where they boarded, at the upper end of the village. Even small boys that were afraid of them mustered courage to grin, and say something about pepper, cloves, saleratus, and Mrs. Porrance's Irish boy.

It was hard to bear, and they vowed vengeance. There was no doubt but what Sol Rogers and his friends would do well to keep their eyes about them from that day forth. They were likely to do so.

The following day was Sunday, and Pat and Van thought they had never seen or heard of anything so still and quiet as that village was, except while the people were going to and from the churches on the green.

"It's as dead as the city is down-town after six o'clock," said Van.

"Deader than that," replied Pat. "Why, there isn't a policeman in sight."

Just so, nor any need for one, for even the academy boys kept Sunday, after a fashion. Some of them better and some of them worse.

Sol was better accustomed to the ways of the place, and he persuaded Van to go to church with him in the morning.

"If you don't," he argued, "Almira 'll make you go with her. Mrs. Porrance never meddles."

"I thought your folks believed in the same denomination?" said Van. "Mine don't."

"That's so, but I don't want my views and Almira's to run together. She doesn't, either. She's given me up. You're a head taller than I am, even if you ain't so good-looking. Be wise, young man, be wise."

"What about Pat?"

"Oh, he can take care of himself. I'm not troubled about Patrick. Miss Almira 'll let him alone. His hair's too red. He's safe."

But he ought to go to church."

"So he will. He went to Mass this morning. He's a wonderfully good fellow, considering his bringing-up. The city's an awfully wicked place."

"That's where I came from."

"Well, look at the difference between you and Pat, and, for instance, me!"

In spite of the soberness with which he tried to say it, Sol broke down in a burst, and Van joined in the laugh.

There was a difference, no doubt, but Sol Rogers would scarcely have got much of a medal on the ground of his "goodness," at least as compared to his two friends. There was nothing very bad about either of them, whether from city or country, but there was a great deal of what the world good-naturedly calls "boy," and it is not always the same as "goodness."

Not till it is trained up, toned down, knocked about and trimmed.

Still, Mrs. Porrance was compelled to say, at supper-time:

"Well, Almira, they've done a deal better than I expected. They've even managed to let that gun alone."

"And they went to church."

But she did not know how earnestly all day the three boys had thought of "home."

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE were a good many people receiving letters from their "boys at school" early that following week, and probably they were all proud of them. Van's father was of the one that came to him, but he shook his head over the request for a gun.

"You'd never consent to that, would you, mother?"

"I'm afraid of some accident."

"If he gets hold of some worthless old barrel up there, it may burst. I'd rather he had a good one."

"Better have none at all."

But Sol has one. It's a little hard on Van. Had I not better pick him out a safe, sound, stub and twist, a breech-loader, and send it to him?"

"Don't say anything more to me about it, then," said Mrs. Rivington. "I'll try and not think of it. He's a dear, good boy."

And she was a dear, good mother, too, and so things looked better for Van than he had hoped.

Sol Rogers's father and mother were used to his letters, but that one raised a bigger laugh than common, for it told the story of the basket.

"Don't speak of it to Denis Mullaly," advised Sol's father. "Let her boys tell their own story."

"They won't tell much about it."

"Then we needn't. Sol and Van seem to have acted rightly."

But if those two letters were good ones, what were they to Pat Nolan's own?

Oh, but didn't his mother's face shine with pride as she showed that paper to Mr. Maguire!

"The b'ye! To think of his writin' all o' that! It's the grand scholar he'll be."

"Just the sort o' writin' for the grocery thrade," said Mr. Maguire. "He must learn to kape books."

"Dade, an' he will; an' to write 'em, too. He's not the b'ye to play thricks on, aythor."

"Sure, 'an I'm as proud of him as av his name was Maguire."

"Are ye? Ye're a good sort of a man, Misther Maguire. I'm glad ye loike Pat."

He had found the weak side of Pat's mother, at all events. It was just when the weak side of any boy's mother is apt to be found.

And little Katrina was very proud to have a letter from the boy that saved her life. She thought he was the bravest and handsomest boy in all the world, red hair or no red hair.

However, the first days of that first week of school left only a vague impression on the minds of these three youngsters at Bunker Academy. It was a sort of general confusion, out of which, under the skilful hands of Doctor Betts and Miss Mortjacks, the three hundred scholars gradually settled into their proper places.

There were little folks of from ten years old and upward, whose parents lived in the village, and there were full-grown young men and women from near and far.

As Sol Rogers expressed it:

"It's about the completest mix there ever was. I never want a family like this, Van."

"I should say not. They'd be too much for you."

"They're almost too much for poor little Doctor Betts. We must do what we can for him, Van."

"What can we do?"

"Help him keep down the dangerous elements. Such as Bob and Joe Hinckley, I mean. He can't do for those boys what we can."

"They're trying to do something for us or I'm mistaken," said Van, quietly. "Maybe they want to give Doctor Betts a little help."

I wish I knew what they were up to. Most likely they'll begin on Pat."

They had tried to, indeed, but Pat's duties at Mrs. Porrance's woodpile were keeping him away from the village green just now. He managed to get to the academy in time, mornings, but there was barely time at noon for eating dinner, and he hurried away at three o'clock, when "hours" were over, so there had thus far been little chance to get at him.

Under Black Sam's instructions, he was beginning to handle his axe fairly well, and he was proud of that. The pile of split wood in the woodhouse was rapidly increasing, but Sam and his saw were away ahead of the ax work, and a new load came in every day.

"Troth, and we'll not freeze this Winter if she can help it," muttered Pat, as a fresh arrival came one morning. "I'm glad of that. But it must be a cowld time she's providin' for."

He had never seen a New England Winter, and he was yet to learn what a grand, good thing a big woodpile is.

Pat's Greek and Latin lessons were, as yet, with one of the lowest classes; but he was working hard for promotion.

As he told Doctor Betts:

"It's little else, sir, that I've to study the now. I've been all through me other things before, only not in the same books."

"It won't hurt you to review them," kindly replied the Doctor. "By and-by, give your time to your Greek and Latin till you're fit for an advance. I will not forget you."

He did not.

Neither did Pat forget to examine the seat of his schoolhouse desk, every time he sat down in it, after his first experience with a "jumping-pin."

"Sure and I put me own foot in the sleek of it," he explained to Van and Sol; "and the way it went into me was cruel. It's a regular tirrap!"

"Did you yell?"

"Didn't I, then? And wasn't Doctor Betts comin' into the room at the very minute? Wonder if he thought it was the sight of him brought the voice from me?"

"He understands pins," drawled Sol. "Some wicked boys fixed one in his chair in chapel once."

"Did he jump?"

"No; but he got up and looked around."

"Were they ever found out?"

"Found out? No. The doctor never mentioned it. But it was a big pin."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I heard."

"Then I know what he meant by what he said. He made me a present of it, to my desk, and when I showed him the pin I'd pulled out of me, he took it and looked at it, and said:

"'H'm! A smaller one, but it must have hurt. You must be careful what you sit down on, Patrick.'

"'Troth and I'll be that, sir,' said I, and he smiled and walked away."

"It's one of the Hinckley boys, I'll be bound!" exclaimed Sol. "Oh, but won't we settle with them some of these days!"

"We needn't hurry," said Van. "My father says there's nothing surer than pay-day."

And so Pat kept a sharp lookout for pins and that sort of thing, and made any number of acquaintances among the other scholars, like the merry, good-natured, laughing fellow he was, but there was no manner of doubt but what he had the reddest head of hair in Bunkerville Academy that term.

"Pins! Jumping pins!" Sol had remarked to Van. "No, they won't try anything so old on you or me; but we must keep our eyes peeled. Pins are nothing to what they're mean enough to do. Is my hair turning gray?"

"Can't see that it is."

"Put enough to make it, then. Why won't those Hinckley boys take more after me?"

"I should say that was what they were doing."

"Then I wish Denis Mullaly would take after them with his coach-whip, that's all."

It was a troublesome state of suspense to be in, to be sure, but the lookout they kept was not one whit too sharp. The following Friday morning was beautifully bright and sunny, and there was a tip-top game of baseball going forward on the green, but Sol and Van had somehow got into the discussion of the gun question, and what they should do next day, and they walked on into the academy together. The main door was open, and so was that of the large room where their own desks were, but not a Hinckley, as yet, besides themselves. The desks were close together, but they both stopped at Van's. Sol laid his head down on it for a moment, as if he had some hard thinking to do, and then he sprang suddenly to his feet.

"Van, what have you been up to? You haven't told me a word about it."

"Up to? Nothing, that I know of."

"But what's in your desk, then? Don't lift the lid. Just listen."

Both heads were down now, listening hard, but all they could distinguish was what sounded like a vicious and angry hum.

"Steady," said Sol. "Did you lock your desk yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes, I did. I'm sure."

"Did you look in any humming-birds, that you know of?"

"Guess not. That sounds a good deal more like stinging birds."

"I should say it did. Now, that beats jumping-pins all hollow. What'll we do, Van?"

"Guess we won't open that desk while we're close to it. There must be enough in there to sting a whole roomful. Just hark!"

The hooks were in there, some of 'em. We can take off the inkstand, unscrew the feet, and have the whole thing out the back door in less'n no time."

"Quick, then," said Van. "There's no time to lose."

A screw-driver was gone for, the desk was loosed from the floor and carried to the rear of the academy!

Then a string was fastened to the lid, the key was turned in the lock, the two friends retreated a little distance, and then——

One good jerk, and not only the lid was opened, but the desk itself was upset upon the grass.

Books, papers tumbled out, but no matter for them, for they were followed by an immense "yellow-jacket's" nest.

"How could it ever have got there?" said Van.

"How did any of 'em dare touch it?"

"Easy enough," said Sol. "Cover it and cut it off the branch it was built on, some time in the night, when the stingers were asleep. They must know some way of getting into the academy after it's locked, and so they put it in your desk."

"But I locked my desk; how's that?"

"Easy enough unlocked. Most any key'd open it."

"Then I'll have another lock put on right away. But, Sol, just look at those yellow-jackets."

"They're charging straight through the window into the academy."

"Quick! let's get the desk back into its place. Tumble the books in. I'll lock it."

Never was a job done more rapidly. It was safe enough to pick up the desk, now the angry insects had abandoned it, but they were sure to come back for another look at their ruined nest, which had roiled away somewhere in the upsetting.

Into the main room hurried the boys, and the desk, with all its former contents in it except the hornets, was safely screwed down in its place.

"Stinging birds!" exclaimed Sol; "I should say so! There's one yet, boys."

"You!" shouted Van, as he gave the screw-driver a last twist. "That was one of 'em. Cut, Sol!"

Not another soul, teacher or scholar, had yet come in, for it was not even "chapel time" and the two friends made their escape without any further damage.

"Wouldn't we have got it if we'd opened that desk in the usual way?" remarked Van, as he plastered some soft soap behind his left ear, where that yellow-jacket had made his mark.

"Reckon we would," said Sol. "Glad none of that came to my share. If there's one thing in the world I've a dislike for, it's a hornet sting."

"That's not the way I feel about it."

"Don't you think we'd better be a little late to school to-day?"

"Why?"

"Oh, there won't be any roll-call, nor any chapel, either. I hope no one saw us go in or come out."

"Guess not," said Van; "but I'll tell you what we'd better do."

"Give Bob and Joe a licking!"

"Perhaps. But that'll come soon enough, or I'm mistaken. Just now we'd better warn Doctor Betts."

"Warn him! The yellow-jackets 'll do that."

"There he comes, now."

"Well, said Sol, "come to think, I wouldn't like to see that head of his all stung up. It's big enough now. How does your ear feel?"

"Better'n his will it we don't keep him away from that room."

Just at the edge of the green the two boys met the dignified principal of the academy.

"You want to see me about something?" was his inquiring response to their respectful greeting. "Has anything gone wrong?"

"A little wrong," said Van, feeling behind his ear.

"About the academy? What is it? I'll hear you now."

"Too many yellow-jackets to suit me," said Sol.

"Yellow-jackets! Young man!"

"Yes, sir," said Van. "The main room is full of them. One of 'em stung me. Right there, sir. Looks as if they meant to capture the school."

"Possible! I'll see about it. I'll investigate the matter at once."

"I guess I wouldn't, if I were you. I'd have somebody else to do the investigating."

"Why so, sir? Why, so?"

"Because, doctor, they're all there yet. The liveliest crowd of hornets you ever saw."

Doctor Betts was a man of sense as well of dignity and learning, and he knew something about yellow-jackets as well as about other things, so that Sol's caution was by no means lost on him.

The question, was, however, what it was best to do, and the answer did not come right away.

"We'll run ahead, doctor," said Van, "and see how matters are getting on."

"You're right," said Sol, as they got out of the doctor's hearing. "It won't do to let the other boys know we found it out first."

"I wouldn't mind that so much," replied Van, "but I don't want those Hinckley boys to know I got stung. Please 'em too much."

"That would be too bad. But look, Van, the fun's beginning."

The yellow-jacket business was indeed "public property."

Such a yelling and hooting, and such a stream of boys pouring in and out of the doors of the academy building.

At the same time a gathering crowd of girls, "young lady students," and even villagers, began to line the more safe and distant borders of the green.

"A tumult, indeed!" the boys heard Doctor Betts remark, as he hurried solemnly past them, and they wondered what in all the world he would try to do about it.

"He can't drive 'em out."

"Not if he was twenty of him."

"Twon't do him any good to send for the trustees."

"Wish he would, then. I'd bet on the yellow-jackets."

But even while they were discussing the matter they heard some news that fitted their sense of justice to a hair.

The first boys to enter that schoolroom after Van and Sol had been Bob and Joe Hinckley, followed by half a dozen more of their own particular "crowd."

They had done so without a suspicion but what their cunningly-set trap was quietly awaiting the arrival of their intended victims.

That was where the joke came in.

There had been plenty of insects in that remarkable nest.

It must have been a rare one, both for size and population.

The very Babylon and capital city of the great hornet-nation.

What was more, the angry and buzzing multitude were in no manner of doubt as to what they wanted to do, or how they meant to do it.

And every one of them knew how.

They had lost their own building, they had determined to take Bunker Academy in place of it.

Therefore the Hinckley boys and their companions were intruders, and they and all other human beings were to be driven out, regardless.

And drive them out they did.

Pity they could not have known what an even-handed sort of justice they were doing.

Very nicely stung was every boy of that unlucky company, and every boy of them felt it hurt him all the worse because it was the very thing he had been planning for somebody else.

Now, however, the alarm became general, and there was a grand declaration of war, in which the male scholars joined ferociously, as fast as they arrived.

It would never do, however, to have Bunker Academy knocked to pieces in the way that was threatened, and so Doctor Betts announced from the front steps that:

"The educational exercises are unavoidably interrupted for the time being. You will reassemble at the close of the noon recess, at the sound of the bell."

"Van," said Sol Rogers, "the bell won't ring as soon as that."

"Guess the doctor hasn't had a chance to count those yellow-jackets."

He had not, indeed, and it was late in the day before he felt at all sure that the last of his plucky invaders was "dead or banished."

The doctor learned a good deal that day, for Mrs. Betts had to try everything she could bear of that was "good for stings" before he could eat his dinner in any sort of comfort. And it was poor comfort, then.

"It's all very mysterious," he remarked to his wife, as she put some hartshorn on the bald spot on the top of his head. "There's mischief in it. It is the work of some of the boys. Not of Sol or Van, I think."

CHAPTER XIV.

PAT NOLAN came over from Mrs. Porrance's woodpile just in time to hear Doctor Betts announce that there would be no school that morning.

Very quickly thereafter he received Sol Rogers's assurance that there would be none in the afternoon, either, and with it, from him and Van, an account of the hornet business.

"The spalpeens!" exclaimed Pat. "Did they mean to have us all sthung to death? But I'm glad the little fellows got after them. It's little they'll bother us for a day or two."

"I guess so," said Van; "but now what'll we do with our time?"

"Do with it?" said Pat. "Faith, I know what I'm after."

"What, then?"

"The gunsmith's. He's got a shop down beyond Calkins & Mugger's, and I'm bound to see what's in it."

"What's in it?" exclaimed Sol. "There's pretty much of everything. It's a regular curiosity-shop. Come on, Van; let's go with him. But there's no breech-loader there like mine."

"Do you mean to buy a gun, Pat?"

"I can't say, Van; it's a queer feeling I have about that same. Maybe it I don't have one I'll be stealing Sol's some day."

"That would be bad. But guns cost a deal of money—good ones."

"Sure anything'll do for the likes o' me. I'll see what he's got, anyhow. The yellow-jackets have fixed things for us."

So they had, and in a few minutes more all three of them were standing in the workroom of old Martin's gunshop, looking around upon the queer collection of firearms of all sorts which had accumulated there since the days of Martin's grandfather and the Revolutionary War.

As for the grizzled gunsmith himself, he was at work on a new rifle, and he kept right on until Van Rivington picked up an old-looking piece and asked him what it was.

"That? That's an old cavalry carbine. One of the first patterns of breech-loaders. It's a mighty good weapon, and it throws an ounce-ball, but it's out of date."

"Rifled, is it?"

"Of course. Couldn't use shot in it. No good to either of you."

"I could practice at a mark with it if I had cartridges. What would you sell it for?"

"Not for sale. I'd lend it to you for practice. Let you have all the cartridges you want. They'd cost you something."

"Any danger it'll burst?"

"Never a bit. None of those Government guns ever burst. I can put it in order in ten minutes."

"That'll do for me, then."

But just then their attention was attracted by a loud exclamation from Pat Nolan.

"Moses! Mr. Martin, what sort of a thing do you call this?"

"That's what the early settlers used to fight the Indians with. It's a bell-muzzled fowling-piece."

"Then they didn't call for any cannon in thim days. Look at her, boys."

Well they might, for the bell-muzzle of the huge single-barrel reached above Pat Nolan's cap-front.

It was brown with rust, stocked nearly to the muzzle, the lock was an old-fashioned flint-lock, and the whole thing was heavier than any sort of rifle or shot-gun now in use.

"What'll you take for that same?" soberly inquired Pat.

"Take for it? You couldn't do anything with that. It isn't worth old iron, except for a curiosity."

"Troth and I'll buy it, then. I want a gun that won't coast much."

"Tell you what I'll do," said old Martin, with a twinkle of fun in his spectacled eyes. "I'll clean it up for you, and you can shoot with it for a day or so. Then if you like it, I'll fix it up in modern style. It hasn't been fired off since my grandfather's day."

The old gunsmith came slowly down from his high stool by the work-bench, and took hold of the venerable piece as if he had a new idea in his head.

He put it in a vise and unscrewed the lock; took out the breech-pin, after more than one sharp tap with a big wrench; then he ran a steel "rimmer" through the barrel till he brought out more than a little dirt and rust; then he tinkered a while at the lock, using an unusual quantity of rags and oil.

It took him over half an hour of rapid and skilful work before he began to put the piece together again, remarking:

"There, I'll put in a fresh flint, and then, I declare, I believe she'll go off. But won't it take a heap of powder and shot to load her!"

"I should say it would," said Van Rivington, as he looked down the gaping muzzle.

"Powder was cheap in those days," remarked Sol Rogers.

"Cheap!" said old Martin. "Why, when the Indians were around and it wasn't safe to go out, they used to sit in their houses and sow their cornfields with that kind of a gun. Two charges'd plant an acre."

"They were big men, weren't they?" asked Pat.

"Big! I guess so. Bigger'n either of you boys 'll ever get to be. Don't raise any such men nowadays."

"Nor such guns, either," said Van.

But the boys had got into the spirit of the thing, and they supplied themselves liberally with ammunition.

"Let's hurry out of the village as fast as we can," said Sol. "We'll go right down the valley. The lower pond's a great place for blackbirds, and Pat won't want to carry that cannon any too far, I'll get my gun."

Van had secured his carbine, and it was not a light one by any means.

"It'll carry half a mile," said old Martin. "Never mind if it kicks a little. You'll be sure it's gone off."

Sol hurried back to Mrs. Forrance's after his gun, and was particularly proud of old Martin's admiration of it when he brought it back.

Then they all three set off as if they had a forced march before them, and a battle to come at the end of it, for they did not care to have a crowd of academy boys following them.

"They'd come sure, if they saw us," said Sol, "and that would spoil all the fun."

"I'm curious to see what sort of work Pat's cannon 'll do," said Van.

"Don't laugh at that same," said Pat, "till after you've tried your carbine."

There was sense in that, but they were scarcely half a mile below the village, following the winding course of the little "river," as the village people called it, that led the two mill-ponds, when Sol exclaimed:

"Hist! Look there! There's a chipmunk. Can you hit him, Van?"

"Hit him? That little fellow? He's only six rods off. I'll try. I've practiced a little in a gallery."

He had put one of the heavy army cartridges old Martin had sold him into his carbine, and now he raised it to his shoulder, took a long, careful squint through the sights, and blazed away.

Van had held the carbine firmly, but he spun clean around upon his feet as the loud report rang down the valley.

"Where on earth's that chipmunk gone to?"

"He's missed him," said Pat. "May be the little chap dodged."

"The gun didn't, then," said Van. "My shoulder feels as if a horse had kicked me."

He sprang forward, nevertheless, but there was no sign of his intended "game" on the bit of stone wall where the chipmunk had been sitting.

"Hurroo," shouted Pat Nolan; "here's the tail of him."

"And here's a leg!" screamed Sol, picking up something from the grass about ten feet off. "If that chipmunk wasn't fool enough to try and catch that ball!"

Two or three scattered bits of fur, something that looked like an ear, and that was all they had to show for Van Rivington's first shot. He had not missed, however, and he was inclined to plume himself on that. It had been very bad for the chipmunk.

"Are they good to eat?" asked Van.

"What there is of them may be," said Sol, "but I never heard of one being cooked. We'll go for squirrels one of these days. A fellow don't have to be very hungry to eat squirrel."

"But how this carbine would knock one to pieces!"

"I should say it would. Van, I'm afraid you won't do much on blackbirds with that thing."

"No, nor Pat, either. Pat, are you loaded up?"

"Not yet. Guess it's about time. I know how to load a gun."

"If you don't, I do," said Sol. "Put in your powder first. Shovel in a heap of it or it won't cover the bottom of that awful gun-barrel."

Pat obeyed, and it is just probable he was right about the quantity the gun had been used to in its younger days.

Then a great wad of newspaper was rammed down hard. Then followed a handful of No. 6 shot and another wad, and even then it did not seem as if the old "bell-muzzle" had much of a charge. The flint lock was something of a puzzler, but Sol had seen one worked, and they made out to get it properly primed, and the pan shut down, all ready for use.

"It's a good deal of a gun, after all," said Van, "but it's well it isn't a double-barrel."

"Come on, boys," shouted Sol. "We're pretty near the pond now, and the blackbirds 'll be thick in the swamp."

The "lower pond" was a long, irregular affair, not very wide, but pretty deep in some places, with a grist mill and saw mill at the lower end of it, and a good deal of swampy, bushy land along its western side.

There would have been fish in that pond if there had not been so many boys in Bunkerville.

Now it happened that it was pretty nearly time for the blackbirds of that valley and the surrounding country to gather for their annual trip to the south, and the low bushes around the pond were precisely the place for them to gather in, with plenty of good feeding-grounds close by.

It had been a good year for them, and they were in fine, fat condition.

"Look at them, boys!" exclaimed Sol. "Just see how they swarm in the bushes. They're fairly black with 'em!"

So they were, not to speak of the flocks that were going and coming.

"Pat," said Van, "if you let drive at the bushes they'll rise. Then Sol can let them have it in the air."

"Exactly the thing," said Sol. "I was thinking of that. We're just about ten rods from the thick of 'em. Rest your cannon over the fence, Pat."

"I'll brace him up," said Van. "It may kick him over."

"Troth, and if it does," said Pat, as he thrust the old gun forward, "I'd rather come down on the grass."

It was not so easy taking aim with that gun, for a fellow who was not accustomed to it; but Pat had cocked it, and he felt sure he had leveled it on a line with the bushes, and he gave the trigger a pull.

"Harder!" shouted Sol. "She won't go off easy. Pull!"

A flash, a tremendous report, a good sharp kick — but not so hard as Van's carbine had given, and then, as a great cloud of blackbirds arose from the bushes, Sol blazed away with both barrels of his new gun. He did not pretend to take aim at any particular bird, but it was a wonder how many fell.

"Shall I run and pick 'em up?" excitedly shouted Van Rivington.

"No, sir-e-e!" replied Sol. "They'll settle in a minute, and we'll give 'em another grist."

Curiously enough, he was right.

The breech-loader was quickly ready, but by the time the "bell-muzzle" was loaded again the bushes looked almost as black as ever.

How she did roar with that second discharge! and once more Sol did good execution with his right and left.

"They won't settle there again this morning," said Sol. "Let's go in and pick up as soon as we're loaded. We may have to swim for some of 'em."

No, but they had to wade and to scramble among the bushes and flags over quite a piece of that swamp before they picked up all their birds.

"It seems a pity to have murdered so many of 'em," said Van.

"Does it?" replied Sol. "You just wait, then, till you've eaten blackbirds on toast or a blackbird pot-pie. You won't feel half so bad about it after that."

"We've knocked down over a hundred of 'em," remarked Pat Nolan.

[To be continued.]

"Three Boys" was commenced in No. 613.

THREE BOYS.—"DOWN WENT PAT, AND OVER WENT HIS BASKET. IT LOOKED AS IF MRS. FORRANCE WAS IN A FAIR WAY TO HEAR A POOR ACCOUNT OF HER NEW BOY'S FIRST ERRAND, WHEN THERE CAME A SUDDEN CHANGE IN THE ASPECT OF AFFAIRS."—SEE PAGE 196.

HARRY R. POST, PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 11, BERGEN SQUARE, JERSEY CITY, N. J.

Distinguished Scholars of Jersey City (N. J.) Schools.

HARRY R. POST,

PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 11, BERGEN SQUARE, JERSEY CITY, N. J.

HARRY R. POST is an intelligent and amiable boy, with whom we had a very pleasant interview at Grammar School No. 11, Bergen Square, Jersey City, N. J. Such had been his application to study, and such his success in taking "championships," that the Principal felt justified in calling him up before the whole school as a pupil worthy of public notice in this journal. He was born in Jersey City, June 7th, 1865, making him nearly fourteen years of age. When seven years old he commenced his studies in a small private school, and later attended other schools of the same kind. He finally entered Grammar School No. 11, taking the primary studies, and in which he succeeded most satisfactorily. Going into the Grammar Department he exhibited increased intelligence in his application, and from time to time passed excellent examinations. He is now in the first class, and his merit record is of exceptional excellence. Mr. Ward, the Principal, is a keen judge of both intellect and character in pupils, and he expressed a very favorable opinion of young Post. He stands erect, and has a well-formed head, with a pleasant expression of face. He is evidently a boy who gladdens the hearts of his teachers by doing well in school, and of his parents by not less exemplary conduct when out of it.

HELEN HUSON,

PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 11, BERGEN SQUARE, JERSEY CITY, N. J.

HELEN HUSON is the most prominent scholar of the first class of the Female Grammar Department of Grammar School No. 11, Bergen Square, Jersey City, N. J. This is the only school in the city which has separate departments for the two sexes. Frances Soper is the lady Principal, and the classes are always an index of the fidelity with which she discharges the duties of her position. Helen Huson was born in Hoboken, N. J., May 24th, 1865, and is therefore fourteen years of age. She is the daughter of Isaac A. and Catherine Huson. At the early age of five years she became a pupil in the Primary Department of No. 2, in Jersey City, and advanced to one of the higher grammar classes. In September, 1876, she entered the third grammar class of No. 11. In that class, in the second, and in the first, she displayed great diligence and made a brilliant record. Having completed the studies of the school, she presented herself as a candidate for admission to the High School, and passed a successful examination with a per centage of ninety-two. She determined, however, to return to No. 11, and pass another term in the first class, where we saw her. Of course her standing in the class is the highest, and her attainments are not only an honor to herself, but an incentive to her classmates. She is a girl of agreeable appearance and manners.

MAJOR-GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT.

IN any other country than ours General Scott would have been esteemed a hero, and not only would cities and states been named after him, but the people and governments would have vied with each other to do him honor during his life and to perpetuate his memory after his death. Statues would have been erected to him, his name would be recorded high up in the roll of warriors, and his deeds held up to the boys of the country for their admiration and their guidance. But in republican America we harass and annoy our heroes while they live, and forget them when they are dead.

General Scott was a native of that same State which has given so many great men to this country —Virginia. Petersburg was his native city, and June 13th, 1786, his birthday. Like so very many other soldiers who have won deathless renown, General Scott was first intended for a lawyer, and after his course of study in William and Mary College, he pursued a legal course, being admitted to the bar in 1806, when he was but twenty years old, but in one short year he turned his back for ever on the dry and musty records of court, and took up the sword.

In 1808 he was made a captain of light artillery, and soon his young hot blood had led him to make some disparaging remarks about his superior officer, General Wilkins, for which he was court-martialed and suspended from the army for one year, during which he devoted himself to the study of military tactics. In July, 1812, he was made Lieutenant-Colonel, and during the War of 1812 he distinguished himself so that, in March, 1814, he was promoted to be Brigadier-General.

At the battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane he especially distinguished himself for his bravery. At the latter he had two horses shot under him, and was twice severely wounded.

This War of 1812, coming so soon after Scott's entrance to military life, gave him the opportunity that so many brave men die without having, and he showed himself worthy of it. After the war concluded, Congress passed a vote of thanks, voted him a gold medal, promoted him to be Major-General, then the highest rank attainable, and he was offered a seat in the Cabinet as Secretary of War, which, however, he declined, but soon after visited Europe in a military and diplomatic capacity. After remaining abroad about a year he returned home, and in 1817 he married Miss Mayo, of Richmond, and from that time till 1832 he lived peacefully, devoting his time to the elaboration of military manuals. He was engaged in the Indian wars of 1832 against the Sacs and Foxes; of 1835 against the Seminoles. He also commanded the Federal forces in South Carolina during the nullification troubles.

In 1841 General Macomb, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the United States, died, and Scott was selected for the position, and when the Mexican War broke out in 1847, Scott was assigned to the chief command, and from March 9, 1847, when he landed with 12,000 men at Vera Cruz, until September 14th, when his army triumphantly marched into the City of Mexico, his progress through the country was a series of triumphs.

Four years afterward, that is, in 1852, the Whig party took up General Scott as a Presidential candidate, but he was defeated by Pierce, the Democratic candidate, and thence until the close of his life he remained out of the public view.

When the Rebellion broke out General Scott's age and infirmities prevented him from taking an active part, and on October 31st, 1861, he retired from the service, retaining his rank, pay and allowances. After returning from a short visit to Europe he removed to West Point, where he died May 29th, 1866.

General Scott, though a Virginian by birth, remained thoroughly loyal to the Union when his native State seceded. He filled the time between the breaking out of the war and the date of his resignation with putting the city of Washington in a thorough state of defense. But his seventy-five years of hard work prevented him from any activity in the field. He showed in the Mexican campaign and the other wars in which he fought the sort of stuff of which he was made.

ROY, THE RANGER.

A Tale of the Mexican War.

CHAPTER X.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.

FALCON was followed by some twenty of his men, amongst whom were Tom Harnett and Ned Graghty, and the majority of the rest were of European extraction—that is to say, they were neither Mexican nor Indian.

These were the picked men of his band—those upon whom he relied when any fighting was to be done, and were mostly deserters from the United States army.

HELEN HUSON, PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 11, BERGEN SQUARE, JERSEY CITY, N. J.

ROY THE RANGER.—"SEIZING HER SWORD WITH BOTH HANDS, SHE RAN IT THROUGH HIS BODY, THE BRIGHT BLADE COMING OUT BETWEEN HIS SHOULDERS, AND THE HILT RESTING UPON HIS BREAST."

The Mexicans and Indians of his command were a cowardly set of ruffians, who cared only to murder and plunder defenseless travelers, and would run like sheep before any organized attack.

Falcon was in a furious temper now. His ignominious flight had galled him to the quick, and he determined to make Zelia pay dearly for it.

"There she is! Secure and disarm her!" he cried, pointing to Zelia.

But none of his band stirred. They did not seem to have any inclination to interfere with this woman with the gleaming sword in her hand.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Hartnett, mindful of his promise to Roy. "What's broke loose here?"

"Obey my orders and make no question!" returned Falcon, fiercely.

"Don't get riled, captain," responds Hartnett. "The woman can't get away; I can take the sword away from her any time. But what's she done?"

"Betrayed, deceived, tricked me!" cried Falcon, hoarsely.

"Well, well, that's just what the women are sent here for, to trick us men," said Hartnett, shaking his head with that gravity he always assumed when giving vent to any of his philosophy. "Cheated you on the ransom, eh?"

"Yes."

"It isn't to come?"

"Yes; it is here."

"Here? Then what is the fuss about? What was the ransom?"

"Herself."

"She?"

"Yes; she agreed to marry me if I would release her stepson."

Tom Hartnett broke into a loud guffaw, in which he was heartily joined by Ned Graghty and half a dozen others.

"Ho, ho, ho! Well, that was a go!" he cried.

"He lies!" exclaimed Zelia, shrilly. "He has taken a dishonorable advantage of my position here, of my affection for my stepson, and offered violence to me. Man, I appeal to you! Set me free—conduct me to Matamoras. I have a letter-of-credit on a banker there, and I can reward you well."

"Hello! that's a horse of another color!" said Tom Hartnett.

"Begorra! here's the old story of the mare proving the best horse of the two coming up again," added Ned Graghty.

Falcon scowled darkly upon them. He saw a spirit of insubordination that was likely to prove dangerous to his authority.

"She is a tigress who sought my life!" he cried. "Look at this rent in my coat, where her keen dagger cut its passage through. Even now the weapon lies upon the floor of my chamber. Go, Esteran, bring it hither, and bring my sword and pistols at the same time."

This order was given to a Mexican member of his band, who instantly obeyed it.

"The blow was struck in self-defense," protested Zelia. "He wished to force me into a marriage to be performed by a sham priest."

A burly monk stepped forward from the throng.

"Here is Padre Gregorio," cried Falcon. "Let him say whether he is a sham priest or not."

"I was sent for, daughter, and I belong to the Holy Order of St. Francisco," said Gregorio.

He was a greasy, fat-faced, twinkling-eyed man, with flabby features, a squat figure, and a paunchy stomach. His appearance plainly indicated that he would perform Romano Falcon's bidding without hesitation.

"Did you agree to marry the captain?" demanded Tom Hartnett of Zelia.

She was silent.

"Silence gives consent," whispered Ned Graghty, who stood at Tom's elbow.

"I see her little game," Tom returned, apart to him. "It was a dodge to get the youngsters set free, and a neat one it was."

"Begorra, it was!"

"But we must stand by her."

"To be sure we will. Isn't she a female, and a countrywoman of ours, to boot?"

Esteran returned, bringing Falcon's sword and pistols to him, and the bandit chief grasped them eagerly.

They were handsome weapons. The sword had a handle of pearl, with a gilt cross and chain, and the scabbard was of brass, richly embossed. The pistols were silver-mounted, with long, glistening, blue barrels.

Falcon buckled on the sword, thrust one of the pistols into his belt, and held the other in his right hand.

"You hear?" he cried. "She cannot deny that she promised to marry me. And she shall keep her word, here, in the presence of you all."

"Never! I will die first!" exclaimed Zelia, desperately.

"Then die!" he returned.

He raised his pistol and took deliberate aim at her. Zelia maintained her position undauntedly. A murmur arose from the lips of the ruffians clustered behind their chief.

This display of courage in a woman appealed strongly to the sympathy of these lawless men.

Zelia caught that murmur, and it gave her fresh courage. It angered Romano Falcon.

"Silence!" he commanded, peremptorily. "I will soon end this business."

Again he covered Zelia with the pistol.

"Throw down that sword!" he cried. "You will not? I will count five—when I reach five I shall fire if the sword still remains in your hand."

Still Zelia gave no evidence of complying. She grasped the sword firmly, holding it on guard, and her bearing was bold and dauntless.

"She's clear grit!" said Hartnett, apart, to his chum.

"I've often heard of the White Sergeant, and, faith, I'm thinking this is she!" returned Ned Graghty.

Falcon began to count, and he did so with a menacing distinctness.

"One—two—three—*four!*"

He paused here, and the band watched Zelia with excited interest.

Still did she grasp the sword; nay, more, she waved its bright blade defiantly as he paused. Enraged beyond himself, Romano Falcon did what he did not intend to do.

He shouted "Five!" furiously, and pulled the trigger of his pistol.

The explosion followed, and the bullet sped upon its course; but it did not strike Zelia, but lodged in the wall far above her head, for the moment Falcon fired Tom Harnett struck up his arm.

Falcon turned furiously upon his subordinate.

"Why did you do that?" he demanded; and as he did so Ned Graghty slyly slipped the other pistol from his belt.

"To prevent you from making a fool of yourself," replied Tom Hartnett, coolly. "What use would the woman be to you if you killed her?"

Falcon could but acknowledge the truth of this.

"You are right," he said. "My anger carried me too far."

"Draw your own sword and disarm her," suggested Hartnett.

Zelia had seen Hartnett's interposition in her favor, and thanked him with a speaking glance, and she now overheard his words.

"Let him try it!" she cried, excitedly. "Let him meet me sword to sword, and I will prove myself more of a man than he is!"

The band hailed this proposal with delight.

CHAPTER XI.

WOMAN AGAINST MAN.

A CHALLENGE, and from a woman! There was enough chivalry in the breast of even that lawless band to appreciate it. Ruffians though they were, they were soldiers, had been under fire, and were brave enough when occasion demanded it.

Besides, the novelty of seeing a woman fight a duel was irresistibly attractive.

And this was a duel that Zelia had proposed to Romano Falcon, and she was in earnest—there was no mistaking that. The poise of her body, the fierce light that shone from her radiant blue eyes, sufficiently proclaimed it.

Tom Hartnett particularly enjoyed her proposal.

"There's the kind of wife you want," he told Falcon. "Go in and win her. Take the conceit out of her now, and you'll never have any trouble with her afterward."

The rest of the band applauded these words. Padre Gregorio shook his fat sides with laughter.

"Win her, my son; win her!" he cried. "Win her, *mano forti*—that is, with the strong hand."

Romano Falcon evinced a reluctance to encounter Zelia. He was not so well skilled in the art of fencing as his followers imagined, though it was well known that he was very careful not to expose his person too rashly in attack, the post of danger being assigned to his lieutenants; but he did not see how he could decline the challenge without lowering himself in the estimation of his followers. He was a coward naturally, and, like all cowards, he wished to appear brave.

A desire for such a reputation often leads men into awkward dilemmas. The bandit chief now found himself in one.

To decline the challenge would look like cowardice, to disarm her in the presence of his band would be a great triumph, and it would place her utterly and entirely at his mercy, for he would have won her then by his sword, and not a member of the band, not even Hartnett and Graghty, would interfere in her behalf.

Besides, he reasoned, she could not possibly understand the use of the weapon she held in her hand. It was an idle bravado on her part.

It was but to cross swords with her, and one turn of the wrist would send the weapon flying from her hand.

Swayed by these thoughts, the bandit drew his sword from its scabbard and accepted the challenge.

"Well, my men, as you wish some sport you shall have it," he said. "I will meet this termagant, though it is a strange encounter for a soldier. But let the terms of the encounter be fully understood. If I disarm her she must allow Padre Gregorio to perform the marriage service between us at once. Do you consent to this?" he demanded of Zelia.

"Yes, with this proviso: that if I am the victor I am to go free," she replied.

"That's fair!" exclaimed Tom Hartnett.

Romano Falcon did not agree with him. He intended to keep her in any event. Zelia noted his hesitation.

"I shall have to kill this man; I see no help for it," she murmured.

"Is that agreed upon?" she added aloud to him.

"Yes," he answered, slowly.

He saw the eyes of his band fixed expectantly upon him, and he had missed the pistol from his belt. This denoted a spirit of insubordination in the band, and he felt that he must temporize with it; but he formed a secret resolution to take Hartnett and Graghty to task when he had disposed of Zelia.

"God help me! for if I am conquered I am lost indeed!" murmured Zelia.

Then she advanced resolutely toward Romano Falcon, crying out:

"I am ready for you—on guard!"

Falcon threw himself into an approved fencing attitude, and the bright blades were crossed.

The band gazed on eagerly.

"She knows what she's about!" exclaimed Hartnett to Graghty. "But where did she ever learn to handle a sword?"

"Begorra! she does know, wherever she learned it," answered Graghty.

And so it proved. This duel was of short duration, and terminated in a manner which none of the lookers-on had anticipated, for no sooner had their swords crossed than Zelia began thrusting at Falcon in a most determined and vindictive manner, and, remembering her ill-success with her dagger, she aimed all her thrusts at his face and neck.

Bewildered by this furious onslaught, Falcon failed to guard himself. He received a thrust between the eyes that staggered him, and caused him to drop his sword; and seizing her sword with both

MAJOR-GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT.

hands she run it through his body, the bright blade coming out between his shoulders, and the hilt resting upon his breast.

When she drew forth the sword Falcon fell to the floor, and a cry of amazement broke from the lips of the band. Then followed exclamations, hurriedly and discordantly mingled together.

"She has killed him!"

"What a woman!"

"She is a she-devil!"

"Kill the accursed one!"

"Revenge our chief!"

But these threats of vengeance came only from the lips of the Mexicans and the Indians. They seemed disposed to precipitate themselves, knife in hand, upon Zelia, who had retreated to the wall and again stood at bay.

Tom Hartnett threw himself before these swarthy ruffians, with a huge horse-pistol in his right hand and a long bowie-knife in his left.

"Stand back!" he cried, resonantly. "Fair play's a jewel. If the captain's dead, she killed him in fair fight."

"That's so!" added Graghty, taking his place beside Tom Hartnett, and displaying the pistol he had purloined from Falcon's belt conspicuously. "And there'll be more killing if she's molested!"

A murmur from the majority of the men—those with full beards and frogged vests—showed their sympathies were with Hartnett and Graghty.

"Brave men!" cried Zelia, smilingly.

She saw that her plan was likely to prove a success, and her spirits rose proportionately.

"We are that, ma'am," replied Graghty, touching his hat politely. "But, begorra! you're equal to us, any day in the week."

"It was a fair bargain between the captain and the woman," Hartnett said to the band. "If he beat he was sure to have her; but if she beat she was to go free."

"Yes, but it was not to be a duel to the death," cried Estevan. "He was not trying to kill her."

"No, no, no!" from the Mexicans.

"Oh, it wasn't he!" retorted Hartnett. "Where would she be now if I hadn't knocked his pistol up when he fired at her?"

A murmur from the European element in the band showed that they thought Hartnett had propounded an unanswerable argument.

During this the pursy monk, Gregorio, had knelt beside Falcon, and raised his head from the floor.

"He is dying!" he exclaimed.

This exclamation drew the band around their prostrate chief, and Zelia, no longer feeling any violence, advanced and stood by his feet, and bent forward, leaning with both hands upon the hilt of the good rapier that had served her so well.

Her face was the first object that met his glazing eyes as he unclosed them, recovering from the partial swoon into which the pain of his wound had thrown him.

A gleam of fierce malignity shot from them as they rested upon their foe.

"Beautiful devil!" he gasped.

"Be calm, my son," said Gregorio, soothingly. "Your hours are numbered."

Falcon's features twitched convulsively. Anger, pain and abject fear were strangely mingled in their expression.

"Am I dying?" he faltered.

"I fear so, my son."

The bandit's form quivered in an agony of apprehension.

"Oh, Holy Mother! Sainted Virgin! Must I die! and by a woman's hand!" he cried, shrilly. And then a passion of wrath convulsed him. "Let her not escape!" he shrieked, vindictively. "Kill her, the she devil! kill her!"

This burst of passion proved fatal to him. The blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and he fell back, dead!

Father Gregorio laid his head gently down upon the floor, for he had died in his arms.

"He is dead," said he, gravely. "*Ordo deo*—We must submit to Providence."

"Vengeance on the murderess!" yelled Estevan.

He drew his knife from his belt and sprang, tiger-like, upon Zelia. Tom Hartnett caught him by the collar before he reached her, and gave him a twirl that sent him spinning into the corner of the apartment.

"You try that on again, you Mexican son of a gun, and I'll put daylight through you in a twinkling!" roared Hartnett. "I'm captain of this party, now that Falcon's dead. Isn't that so, boys?"

"Ay, ay!" came promptly from a majority of the bandits.

Estevan and the other Mexicans received this announcement doggedly, but they dared not offer any objection. They knew that the best fighters in the band were all on Hartnett's side, and as he had been first lieutenant to Falcon it was but a regular sequence that he should succeed to the command on his death.

"I'm captain now, and Eduardo here will be first lieutenant, and you, Estevan, will be second," continued Hartnett, artfully bestowing this office upon Estevan to conciliate the Mexican element in the band.

This stroke of policy had the desired effect upon Estevan. His countenance brightened up with a gratified look, and he cried out, lustily:

"*Viva Capitano Thomaso!*"

And the rest of the Mexicans took up the cry.

A live captain is always worth more than a dead one, and it did not matter much to them who their captain was so long as he put them in the way of plunder.

"Take the captain out, and we'll give him a soldier's funeral," said Hartnett.

"And here is to pay for masses for his soul, good father," added Zelia, who had taken out her purse, and she gave Gregorio five golden eagles.

The fat monk's little eyes glistened as he received them, and his delight was mingled with some little astonishment.

"Are you a true daughter of our Holy Church?" he inquired.

Zelia bowed her fair head before him affirmatively. She was willing to be the daughter of any church to further her projects, and Father Gregorio laid his oily palm upon her golden hair in unctuous benediction.

"Then do I grant you absolution for this deed," he said. "Those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword—such is the chance of war. Your skill was superior to his, and he succumbed before you. *Requiescat in pace*, to him; to you, *Pax vobiscum*."

The good priest, having thus blest her, quietly slid the golden coins into the pocket of his frock, and smiled complacently as he heard them go jingling into its depths. Their merry music was all the more pleasant as being, to his ears, an unaccustomed sound.

Two of the band raised the body of Falcon and bore it from the apartment.

Gregorio and the rest of the men, with the exception of Hartnett and Graghty, followed.

"Make yourself comfortable in the captain's chamber—you know where it is—until we have planned him, and then I will have a talk with you about your future movements," Hartnett said to Zelia.

"Very good," she replied; "and I will thank you in a substantial manner for your kindness to me. But have you nothing to eat in the house? I am very nearly famished. Couldn't you get me something edible, and a bottle of wine?"

"Oh, yes; there's no lack of provisions around here, and wine, or *aguardiente*. I prefer that to the wine itself; but it might be too fiery for you."

"What is it like?"

"It is a kind of rum made out of sugar-cane."

"And it's just illigant!" added Graghty, and he smacked his lips approvingly.

"I should prefer wine, I think," said Zelia, with a smile; "but anything would be acceptable, for I feel weak and faint after all the excitement I have been through."

"You're a trump!" exclaimed Hartnett, with a look of honest admiration on his bronzed and seamed visage; "you're just the smartest woman I ever saw."

"Begorra, you are!" added Ned Graghty, with equal admiration.

Zelia bowed her head graciously, and smiled sweetly in acknowledgment of these compliments.

"We're going to stand by you for the youngster's sake," continued Hartnett.

"Hush!" cried Zelia, quickly.

"Yes; Roy Bellingham, the Texan Ranger, you know."

"You saw him through the chaparral?"

"We did; and showed him the way to Point Isabel."

"Do you think he will reach there in safety?"

"Beyond a doubt."

"Thank heaven for that!" cried Zelia, fervently. Then, after a moment's pause, she added: "Did he speak of me to you?"

"He did; and told us to see that no harm happened to you. But you appear to be able to take care of yourself."

"Thanks to Roy—he taught me how to use a sword!" Zelia's eyes flashed, and her bosom swelled proudly at the thought. "I little thought that the knowledge would stand me in such good stead; but we never know what is to happen to us in this world."

"That's so," responded Hartnett, with his oracular shake of the head.

He was very fond of making these trite observations himself, as we know.

"I am keeping you from the funeral," continued Zelia. "Go, give him a soldier's grave, although he was only a cur."

"You are right enough there. He'd never have crossed swords with you if he had thought that you intended to pink him. Wait for us in the chamber yonder, and we'll secure the door, for the Mexicans are treacherous and revengeful, and some of them might bear a spite against you for the captain's death. We'll soon bring you something to eat, and a bottle of wine."

"And I hope you will join me in the repast," said Zelia, with one of her most engaging smiles.

Hartnett looked gratified by this invitation, so graciously extended.

"We will," he answered, heartily. "I'm captain now, and I'll do the honors."

"Do not forget that you owe your promotion to me," rejoined Zelia, significantly. "Nor is that all I intend to do for you and your friend. You shall have no cause to repent the service you have this night rendered me."

She inclined her head graciously again, and retired from the apartment, going to the smaller chamber, which she knew would be appropriated to her exclusive use whilst she remained in the house, and she carried the sword with her, for she had not relinquished it from her grasp.

"She's one of them women you read about!" cried Hartnett, as she disappeared. "A kind of a rip-snorter, like Joan of Arc or old Queen Bess."

"Not a bit more nor less, I should say," said Graghty. "But have a care, Tom, my boy—don't lose your head about her! She's purty to look at, but mighty dangerous to handle."

"You're right enough there—and Romano Falcon found it out to his sorrow. Let's go and plant the poor devil."

Chuckling pleasantly together, the two ruffians went to dispose of the body of their unfortunate chief.

When Zelia reached the smaller chamber her first care was to examine the door. She discovered, to her satisfaction, that there was a strong bolt to it. She closed it, and shot the bolt into its socket.

"This will enable me to snatch a few hours of slumber, for I am sadly needed," she murmured. "I might have known that a man so careful of himself as this Romano Falcon undoubtedly was would have taken all precautions to guard against a surprise. He knew he could not depend upon the fidelity of such a band of miscreants as he commanded. This new captain means me well, I think; but I do not intend to trust him too far. I am in his power, and he may make that fact unpleasantly evident before I am done with him. I cannot tell how far his promise to Roy will keep him within the bounds of proper respect, nor why he should have given that promise."

Her brow clouded at this reflection, and a troubled look came from the depths of her dark-blue eyes.

"Could he have been one of the ruffians employed by Onslow upon that night?—the night that Roy's father——"

She paused and shivered.

"Oh, heaven! that fatal deed never be blotted from my memory!" she cried, plaintively. "Oh, if I could forget! Where are those fabled waters of oblivion? I would give all I possess in the world for a Lethean draught that would make that portion of life a blank—a blank that no spark of memory could ever shed one ray of light upon!"

She cast the sword upon the bed and sank down beside it, wringing her white and jeweled fingers with a piteous action. This attitude was in strong contrast with her usual resolute bearing. She was more the woman now and less the Amazon.

"A dread conviction flashes through my soul that one day Roy will discover all," she resumed tremulously. "He will learn the dread truth, and then he will despise, abhor me! And I—why, I should kill myself, and end all!"

This resolution appeared to restore her self-possession.

"How could he discover it?" she continued, as new thoughts presented themselves to her ever-busy brain. "These men might tell him of Onslow's complicity in the deed, but they could not tell him of *mine*; they could not tell him, for they do not know it. Pshaw! I am growing foolish! Our fears are our worst enemies. Shadows frighten more than the reality. They are like the ghosts that imagination conjures up. Enough of this! I will no longer entertain one thought of detection. I will banish all these idle fears from my mind."

The tremor passed from her frame, and again was the fair head proudly raised.

"He thought of me—he charged these men to watch over my safety!" she cried, with beaming eyes. "Would he have done that if he had entertained one suspicion against me? No, no! I know his frank and open nature. He would not act a falsehood, much less speak one, to save his life. He is the soul of honor and of truth! He thought of me—he cared for me—and it shall go hard but he shall love me yet!"

She took up the sword and surveyed it proudly.

"Thanks to his teaching, I have proved that though I am a woman I have the skill and daring of a man!"

For the proper understanding of these boastful words I will explain how Zelia Bellingham acquired this skill—a strange, but by no means so uncommon an, accomplishment for a woman as you may imagine.

Roy Bellingham affected all manly sports, and his sudden accession to wealth gave him the means to gratify his desires in that respect; and his guardian, Richard Eaton, approved his course, and often joined him in his sports with all the zest of youth.

Thus Roy had his horse to ride, his boat to sail, his dog and gun, and he took lessons in fencing from a skillful master.

In the chamber in the Bellingham mansion he had his foils and masks, dumb-bells and Indian clubs.

His cousin, Alverton, having outgrown in a measure his early antipathy, became his pupil. Mary Frank witnessed their fencing-bouts, and being something of a Tom-boy, insisted on taking some lessons, and Roy, who never refused to grant any wish she expressed, consented.

So Mary Frank became quite expert; indeed, more so than Alverton.

Zelia's swordsmanship soon came to the knowledge of Zelia, and she became a witness to these exercises; but she was not satisfied with looking on. She also must be taught, and Roy laughingly complied.

He soon found, however, that he had a most exacting pupil, and that she was determined to learn every intricacy of the art. Day after day she took her lessons with a perseverance that surprised Roy.

He never thought that this was a device to be in his society; and that she, knowing his fondness for this warlike sport, was resolved to show him how skillful she could become in it.

Roy at length found it a difficult task to master her, and their encounters with the foils became exciting, so evenly were they matched.

What we like to do is well done. There was not a trick of the sword that Zelia had not learned from Roy, who was himself very proficient.

Thus you will understand that when Zelia dared the lion to the combat she had great confidence in the result.

That she killed him when she could easily have disarmed him, was because she firmly believed that her safety demanded it.

Nor did she feel any compunction for, the dead. She had killed him as she would a wild animal that had appeared in her path and assailed her, and his death would never weigh heavily upon her conscience.

That he had loved her, after his fashion, did not trouble her. The beauty of her face was a lure to destruction, as dangerous as the false beacon that wreckers light to draw some doomed ship upon the treacherous and sunken reef of rocks.

Having surprised the sword to her own use, with a sure conviction that Captain Tomaso—the only name she knew him by—would accede without demur to the appropriation, Zelia began to examine its contents curiously.

She was chiefly attracted by the different articles of dress, and the assortment of weapons hanging against the walls.

"This Romano Falcon had a taste for disguises, evidently," she said. "These costumes may be useful to me, and may shroud my shameful secret. On principle that, 'to the victor belongs the spoil,' I can arrange for their possession with the new captain, however. He is a truculent villain, and may be induced to aid my plans. I cannot travel through the country, in its present disturbed condition, in my womanly attire. I am satisfied of that. The dress is not only inconvenient but dangerous. I have conceived a fondness for this good sword, which has done me such service, and I will choose a dress that will permit me to wear it. Let me see, what shall it be?"

As she debated this question and examined the different costumes for a decision on the subject, a knock sounded on the door.

"Who is there?" she demanded Zelia.

"Captain Tomaso," was the answer, in Hartnett's gruff tones.

"I thought as much." This was to herself. Then she opened the door, and added, "Enter, you are welcome."

Tom Hartnett came in with a couple of bottles of wine in either hand, and Ned Graghty followed him with a salver, covered with a white cloth, on which were two roasted fowls, and bread and fruit, and three antique-shaped wine-glasses.

"Here's a little commissary for you, Mrs. Bellingham," cried Hartnett. "We've planted the late lamented, the departed Falcon, and now we'll take a little refreshment."

(To be continued.)

"Roy the Ranger" was commenced in No. 611.

THE HERMIT'S PLOT.

A TALE OF THE SIOUX FRONTIER.

(Continued from page 198.)

"Yes," he growled, as he pushed forward, "I'll have my money, as he said here, but I want a scalp or two on my own account. I'd never feel safe, even among the Sioux village, so long's thar was any risk of Bill Manton creeping round arter Sally. He wouldn't let up so long's thar was breath in him, Bill wouldn't."

A brawny, rather heavily built fellow was Aleck, with a good deal of clumsy, ungainly strength of frame, his size bringing to notice the one remarkable thing about him, and that was, oddly enough, his head.

"Too big?"

No; on the contrary, although the dark, strongly-marked features were by no means irregular, nor, at first sight, repulsive, the head of Aleck Sanders was apparently too small for his body. The neck was short and strong, but the black-haired, thin-bearded skull moved only too readily and restlessly, and the fiery, penetrating eyes wandered rapidly in all directions, as if "looking for game." It might be merely a hunter's habit, but it might mean a good deal more than that.

Aleck's eyes and head were more than usually restless just now, and he muttered to himself:

"If I only know'd which way that confounded old hermit had took himself! I'd go for his trail if I had time to spare, but I reckon the quicker I git down to Squire Van Lennep's and put in my say agin him the better it'll be for all concarned."

And yet, if Aleck had only known exactly the route old Job had taken, and just where he was at that very moment, his black eyes might have snapped even more viciously than they did.

The moment the strange old man turned away from the spot where the forest tragedy had been enacted, he had glided away over the frozen snow-crust with a speed that was marvelous for one of his age and size, and that sent his white beard and grizzled locks floating out behind him on the keen wind that was now beginning to whistle among the pines.

It was not long before this swift progression brought him out on the brow of the hill overlooking the deep, broad valley dotted here and there with extensive clearings where the strong-armed settlers were turning into wheat-fields and pasture-land one of the best hunting-grounds of the Yanktonnais and Sioux.

It was no wonder the savages forgot their solemn treaties, at times, when they saw what was coming in consequence, or if they longed to change the peaceful columns of "fireside smoke" that curled from the scattered hamlets into the denser and thicker tokens of their own destroying presence.

Up to the present time, indeed, various circumstances, including the rifles of the settlers, had kept the redmen in check, but the Yellow Wolf himself had now determined that—

"No corn grow in Shelter Hill Valley dis year;" and there was no reality in the apparent peace and safety upon which Job Lunt looked down.

Only a moment, however, did the dwarfish hermit pause to look, and, the next, he was gliding down the steep declivity as only men on snowshoes can, avoiding trees and rocks with a dexterity that had something almost "uncanny" in it, and seeming to know every inch of the way as if it had been a fenced road.

Nor was it any great length of time before old Job was compelled to slacken speed and climb, first one fence, and then another, and then he actually was in a "fenced road," and one, moreover, the well-beaten track in the centre of which declared its constant use by the sleigh-loving settlers.

It was, indeed, the highway from Shelter Hill Valley to the clustered mills and stores and homesteads which were fast gathering a town around the military post, some twenty odd miles away; and there were light-built "cutters" to come and go over it, as well as "wood sleighs," and mountainous loads of wheat in sacks.

Job's first movement was to stoop and unbind his snowshoes, as each one in turn left him on such a track, and then he seemed almost in doubt which direction to take.

Then there came a quick, jingling, merry sound of sleigh-bells down the road, and Job stood as still as a statue as it drew nearer and nearer.

Merry and frolicsome and jingling, in spite of the threatening weather, the musical bells rang out on the frosty air, and in a minute or so they came joyously around the turn of the road, borne by a spanking pair of dark bay-horses, in front of a light but somewhat long-boxed sleigh.

"Bill Manton and Sally Van Lennep!" grumbled the hermit; "and mighty quiet-looking they are, I'd say. Reckon they're on their way home, and that'll just bring me to the squire's in a hurry."

So saying, he stepped out into the middle of the road and shouted, in a shrill, hoarse voice:

"Hold up, Bill—hold up!"

The smoking bays were promptly pulled in, and the deep tones of a man, not in the best of humor, apparently responded:

"Holle, Job! is that you? Whar did you drop from?"

"Never you mind whar I dropped from," sharply returned Job with a grin; "you git into your sleigh, and I want you to drive me to Squire Van Lennep's about as quick as you know how. I'most wish you had a fast team to do it with, but these yer plow-horses 'll have to do, seeing they're all you've got."

Job had suited the action to the word, with impish agility, and Manton had to turn in his seat to get the benefit of the malicious grin with which the hermit uttered the slur upon his bay trotters. Far from taking offense, however, the young settler scarcely seemed to notice Job's remark, and said, with a good deal of earnestness, as he again whipped up his bays:

"I'll land you anywhere you say, but I want a bit of a talk with you. You're just the meeting for a fortnight how I could want to fasten eyes on to you."

"Very well, then; now you've found him, if I'm in the way, I'll get out."

This last remark, in a half-piqued, half-roguish voice, came from the bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked brunette who sat by the side of Bill Manton, and Job answered her:

"Not if I kin help it, you won't. Time was when I was better-looking, then Bill himself, but I can't spare any one of ye jest now. Whip up, Bill; mebbe we havent any too much time to spare, and Sally may hear all I've got to say, if she'll agree not to tell anybody."

"Oh, it's a secret, is it?" exclaimed Sally.

"Then, of-course, I won't get out, for I want to hear every word of it."

Bill Manton was looking singularly grave for a fellow of his apparent character. As tall as Aleck Sanders, and was broader and better-proportioned, and his kindly brown eyes looked as if they would kindle into a smile or a laugh on the very slightest provocation. His clear-cut and sunbrowned features were under a species of cloud, as if some things were going wrong, and his mouth seemed to shut like a steel trap behind his yellow mustachios.

"I'm afraid, Sally," he said, "that it will be very necessary for you to keep this secret, even from Aleck Sanders."

"And why do you say that?" exclaimed Sally, with a quick flash in her black eyes and a quiver of her ruby lips. "Who is Aleck Sanders, that I should tell him, and what do you mean by throwing his name in my face?"

There was a gleam of intelligence in Job's withered features, and he said to himself:

"Been quarreling, have they? Wal, I wouldn't blame Bill if he did quarrel with a gal that spoke to Aleck in the same day she spoke to him. Gals is cur'ous critters, though, and it don't do to home 'em too much."

But Bill replied, steadily and gravely:

"It's all your own fault, Sally. I'd rather never mention his name at all, and I wish the settlement was well rid of him, and of everybody like him. Job Launt, we haven't any time to spare, for the pleroes, as you call 'em, are going free. Tell me if hosses, as you call 'em, are going free. you've seen any Indian sign in the woods."

"Heaps of it," sententiously replied Job.

"I reckoned as much," said Bill. "We've been out on the road, six or seven miles, and thar was two places whar I got my eyes on snow-shoe-tracks. Not yours, either one of 'em."

"How many men?" asked Job.

"Two," said Bill. "and, in one place, both were Indians, if I know the difference."

"And how about the other?" said Job, with a look of keen curiosity.

"It had a kind of a white look about it," said Bill, cautiously; "but, then, a feller can't always tell."

"Did it slide a little heavy on the left foot?" asked Job, "and did it cut the crust a little on the inside edge?"

"Just so," said Bill. "Why, have you been on that same trail?"

"Wal, I just have," said Job, with a gleam of almost malicious triumph in his eyes, "and I know who made it. I know one thing more, too."

"What's that?" exclaimed Bill.

"I know I found Whisky Sykes, dead and scalped, up among the rocks, three miles this side of my place."

"But do you know who killed him?" hoarsely responded Bill, and Sally's face was pale as ashes when she leaned forward to hear the answer.

"Was it the Sioux?" she asked.

"It was and it wasn't," replied the grim old hermit, evasively. "But yonder's the squire's, and I won't say any more till I've told him the hull story."

In a moment more the jingle of the bells ceased, as the swift trotters were drawn up before a house of unusually ample proportions, for that day and region, and a big, burly, fine-looking old farmer stood by the door with a most ample welcome in his face and greeting.

Sally Van Lennep sprang from the sleigh without waiting for Bill to help her, and barely paused to give her father a hasty kiss as she darted past him into the house.

Bill Manton was slower in his movements, and scarcely added a word to the rapid exchange of half-civil, half-bitter "chaff" which Job Launt was exchanging with the squire.

His horses first attended to, the young man strode thoughtfully in, accompanied by the hermit, and the squire followed him with the air of a man who knows there is something unusual on hand, and can't begin to guess what it may be.

The Van Lennep homestead was large and solidly built, mingling hewn logs with sawed lumber; but it did not by any means approach the proportions of the enormous barn that stood behind it. It was likely the barn might be empty now, since the huge stacks of straw near it declared that the squire's wheat had been threshed out. It had been marketed as well, and thereupon depended more than they knew for the good people of Shelter Hill Valley.

Inside the house, in a little snuggery beside the kitchen, which the squire called his "office," and used as such, he and his two guests were in deep consultation, a few moments later. Job Launt had done most of the talking thus far, and now the squire interposed, in a deep, strong voice, that was not without a tremor of emotion:

"Can you tell me how strong they are?"

"Of course not," said Bob; "but Yellow Wolf's own band numbers over a hundred braves, and he will have plenty to join him. Some of them."

"Any idea when they mean to come?" asked Bill Manton.

"I wouldn't have, if it was for one thing," said the hermit.

"What's that?" asked the squire.

"They know just what's going on in the settlement," said Job, excitedly. "Fears like I can jest read 'em right through. This yer big quiltin' bee o' your'n, squire, it's to-morrow night, ain't it?"

"Yes," responded the squire.

"And yer mean to have yer big barn packed full, and you'd never a-thought of bein' ready for a fight with double yer number of Yankton Sioux, did you?" sharply inquired the hermit.

"That's it!" exclaimed Bill Manton, bounding from his seat, "or they could take us when we were scattered to go home. They could scalp every able-bodied man, a'most, and have the whole settlement at their mercy. Why, there wouldn't be a house left standing by daylight next morning.

"But how should they know about the quilting, so plumb and certain?" asked the squire. "Thar hasn't been a redskin in as far as this since January."

"How'd they know?" said Job. "Wal, I reckon I kin tell ye, only I ain't quite so sure as I wish I was. D'ye see that thar bullet? Do any one of ye know whose gun it came out of?"

As he spoke the old man held out a ragged bit of lead that had been a small, conical rifle-bullet, of a somewhat unusual style.

"I don't know," replied the squire. "Do you?"

But Bill Manton's face turned a shade or so paler, and he merely nodded at Job, as much as to say:

"I understand—I thought so."

"Wal, squire," continued the hermit, "that ther ugly chunk is what has letched me to the settlement for the first time in over six months."

"How's that?" asked the squire.

"Why, Squire Van Lennep, that thar bullet has been clean through the heart of old Whisky Sykes the yer very day. It lodged right into the backskin on his left arm, and I picked it out afore I buried him. He was dead and cold when I found him, and I come down to let you know about it, 'cause the feller that fired that bullet had a Sioux warrior right alongside of him when he fired."

"And who was it?" asked the now excited squire.

Before Job could answer, however, the kitchen-door of the snuggery was swung open, and the voice of Sally said, uneasily:

"Father, here's Aleck Sanders says he must see you at once on business of great importance. I didn't tell him who was with you."

"Please don't, then," whispered Bill. "Job, that's something up, now, sure's you live. Jump out the side-door here with me. Aleck mustn't git a sight of you just yet."

The action was suited to the word, and it was clear by the twinkle of his black eyes that the squire could be trusted with his share of what was going on.

In a moment more Aleck Sanders was shown into the "office," and found Sally's father all alone.

The door was shut close behind him, and Aleck was quickly all absorbed in the business which had brought him; but he would have done well to have taken his snowshoes along, instead of hanging them by the door as he came into the kitchen. Just now Sally Van Lennep was curiously watching the two men, who were examining those very snowshoes.

"Don't you see, Bill," said John Launt, "the left one's worn the most, 'specially on the inside runner, whar he leans onto it? I could foller him all day by that very mark on the crust. You know that bullet was made in his mold, and came out of his rifle. Wonder what he's come over yer arter?"

"Some deviltry or other," said Manton. "Anyhow, I move we don't let him know we suspect him. Reckon he'd better not so much as know you're here. S'pose you go and wait in the barn till I call you?"

"All right," said the hermit, with a malicious leer of intelligence, as he darted away on the instant.

The moment he had disappeared, Sally Van Lennep came forward, exclaiming:

"Now, Bill Manton, I think you are too bad. I'm sure there's something serious going on, and I can't bear to trifle. Won't you tell me?"

"Sally," said Bill, gloomily, "I wish you were always satisfied not to trifle. There are some things a man can't bear to have said to him, and those are the very things you seem to think it's fun to say sometimes."

"But I take it all back," said Sally, half archly.

"You can't exactly do that," responded the young man. "Some things won't come back when you call 'em. I wish you'd never seen Aleck Sanders!"

"Now, Bill Manton, you're one of the greatest fools I ever saw!" exclaimed Sally, with a flushed face, and a lip that was beginning to quiver a little. "I don't know what to say to you, and I won't say one word about him, good or bad."

Neither will I, then," said Bill; and just then the door of the snuggery opened, and the squire came out, followed by Aleck, whose face wore a singular expression, half of triumph and half of doubt, mingled with more than a little of fierce vindictiveness.

"I've just made out a warrant," said the squire; "for the arrest of Job Launt, for the murder of John Sykes. Aleck Sanders swears to have witnessed the deed, and I have deputed him to serve the warrant, with such help as he can get. Do you want to go with him, Bill Manton?"

"Is he right off for old Job's place, among the rocks?" asked Bill.

"Wal, yes, I am just that," growled Aleck; "but I won't want any man's help to bring in a letter like Job Launt. Least of all, I don't want any of Bill Manton's help, or company, either."

"You wouldn't get it, if you did," quietly responded Bill; but if any words of a more bitter sort were on his lips, he managed to restrain them, and Aleck seemed to have no desire to prolong the conversation.

He picked up his rifle and his snowshoes, muttering that there was no time to lose on a job such as that, and strode out of the house.

Bill Manton followed, and Aleck had no opportunity for a good-by word with her. He seemed to be off at once for the woods and the haunts of old Job, judging by the direction he took.

"Come into the office," said Squire Van Lennep to Bill Manton; and as soon as the door was shut behind them, he asked: "Well, now Aleck's out of the way, tell me all about it."

"Wal," said Bill, "Aleck shot Whisky Sykes himself, with a bullet made in his snowshoes, and the very bullet he did it with. That was an old grudge betwixt 'em."

"I know that," impatiently exclaimed the squire; "but how about the Sioux?"

"I haven't the shadow of a doubt that old Job is right, and they've planned to turn the quilting to-morrow night into a scalping-bee instead. They got all their information from Aleck. He had one of them engaged when he shot poor Sykes. They'll strike first off, because everything'll be easy enough after that."

"I see—I see!" said the old squire, a little nervously, in spite of his half-century on the frontier. "And now, what do you reckon we'd better do? Aleck's no suspicion that we've smelt danger, but we sha'n't see any more of him."

"Not till to-morrow night," said Bill, "and Job Launt's head is as good as anybody's I know of; but I'd give something if 'twas all over. Now for my part—"

"There were strong and ready hands within easy call of such a man as Squire Van Lennep, and all he asked of any man was to keep up with him while he did "his part."

Just now, however, the squire's work had a good deal that was peculiar in it, and from time to time, as he went on with it, his lips would open with a mutter of some kind about Job Launt, and "follerin' the old critter's advice."

"But I reckon we'll see him then, if thar's a good light, unless he paints Indian."

The conference between the two was long and earnest, and at the end of it Job Launt was summoned from the barn, Bill Manton's bay trotters were unhitched, and the two set off in different directions, with just this word at parting:

"Mind, now, Job, every man in the settlement must be on hand."

"Need 'em all, Bill."

For a moment or so Squire Van Lennep stood and looked after them, muttering:

"I reckon it's the only thing to do."

It could scarcely be that he was having so many horses cut and bored and "plugged up again" in the sides of his big barn as a preparation for any other purpose than that of a stable.

And, suiting the action to the word, the queer old fellow clambered up the rugged trunk, and seemed to find himself so good a hiding-place among the twisted boughs that no man on the ground would have suspected his presence.

Scarcely had he done so, however, before his quick ears caught the sound of approaching footsteps from at least two different directions. In a moment more, too, he became aware that the two who were coming saw each other, although not himself, and he hastily whispered:

"Somethin's comin' now. Look sharp, Job; keep yer eye on the redskin. Aleck won't think of takin' hold of Bill Manton."

And yet there they were, Bill and Aleck, steadily advancing toward each other, as if they had met by appointment.

The face of the latter was drawn and menacing in its expression, while the brawny young settler had evidently made up his mind about something. Both were well armed, but neither made any hostile movement until they stood face to face under the old oak.

"Bill Manton?" exclaimed the half-breed, "what's Job Launt?"

The answer did not come in words only, but a square blow between the eyes, straight from the shoulder, was followed by:

"I'p'ape that'll teach ye to lie about me agin to Sally Van Lennep!" and Aleck Sanders measured his length upon the snow, while his gun flew out of his hand.

He struggled instantly to regain his feet, but before he could do so his ears and those of his assailant were saluted by the almost simultaneous reports of two rifles near at hand.

Bill Manton felt a sharp sting on his right side, but at the same instant Job Launt seemed to drop from the air above him, exclaiming, as he alighted on his feet:

"Mark one for me! I hit him in the throat, so he couldn't yell. That's the way I allers did. Hurrah, Bill, thar's more on 'em comin', you bet, and we'd better make tracks."

"Job Launt, you're my prisoner!" shouted Aleck Sanders, as he came once more to a perpendicular; but the words were scarcely out of his mouth before he again went over flat, and this time it was not Bill Manton's hand that struck him.

"Job Launt!" exclaimed Bill; "I never seed a man could handle his feet like you can!"

"Shut up and run," was the ungracious answer. "Don't you hear that whoop? Them crow-calls didn't come from any bird's throat, neither. Come on, I say, and leave him where he is. I've smashed the lock of his gun."

The amazed half-breed had risen only to a sitting posture by the time the two friends had fairly disappeared among the trees, but his ears could catch the now fast-approaching signals as well as Job's had.

The first object that caught his eyes, however, brought him up with a bound, and he sprang forward some fifty paces to where, by the side of the log behind which he had been lurking, the body of a Sioux brave in his war-paint lay still struggling in a prolonged death-agony.

It was the victim of Job Launt's fatal shot from the tree, and the empty weapon that he clutched so tightly accounted for the double report.

"Wonder if he hasn't either on 'em!" said Aleck.

"Hope he did. Anyhow, Yellar Wolf and the rest can't be far away now."

Near enough they were, indeed, and there had been more than one Sioux witness of the collision between their half-breed spy and his white enemies. The wonder, to their minds, was that his life had been spared at all, and they took it as an indication that their own plans were as yet unknown, however their presence might be.

It was this, perhaps, which prevented any immediate rush on the hall of Job Launt and his friend, who were now making the best of their way for Squire Van Lennep's.

"Job," said Bill, as they sprang over the fence into the road, "take a look at my right side. Is dog's hurt much, but it's bleeding some."

"Hit you, did he?" said the hermit, with a quick shadow on his half-malicious features. "Then I'm sorry I didn't kill Aleck Sanders—leastwise, the Indian half of him."

In a moment more, however, the old man had finished his examination, evidently knowing very well what he was about, and he exclaimed:

"All right, Bill; it's a nice little rake along yer ribs, but it won't amount to nothin' at all. Pretty stiff to-morrer, I reckon, but it won't keep ye from fightin' hard to-day. You won't be as good for a long run, though, and I'm glad them red devils ain't any closer. Hullo! thar's a sleigh coming."

One of the neighbors were enough, bound for the "quilting," and glad to give Job and Bill a lift; but every man and woman in the sleigh—two of the former and three of the latter—was armed with rifle or double-barreled gun, in a way quite remarkable for even a frontier country-making.

"Just hide them shootin'-irons in the bottom of the sleigh," said Job Launt. "We don't want the cussed critters to smell what we're up to."

The train that dragged that sleigh were only "plow-hosses," but they did very well, considering. It was evident, as they drew near the squire's house, that the gathering was already considerable, for so thinly settled and scattered a population as that of Shelter Hill Valley, but very few human beings were to be seen, nevertheless.

"Did you ever see such a lot o' sleighs?" exclaimed Job. "But they must git 'em closer in. We mustn't leave 'em out thar for the Sioux to sneak and shoot behind."

Once inside the house, and all things wore a different aspect. There were women and children enough, old and young, but even the latter seemed to have put on a serious look, and there was no "quilting" at all going forward.

Out at the barn, there were very much the same state of affairs, and Job said to Squire Van Lennep:

"Wal, now, squire, what with one sort and another, thar's nigh onto sixty guns, male and female, and most on 'em right good ones, too."

"But what if the Sioux don't come, after all?" asked the squire.

"Wal, that might be all right," said Job; "thar may be enough on 'em to scalp us all in spite of the best we kin do. Then, ag'in, they may hesitate a leetle. I had to shoot one myself, risin' an hour ago."

"Did you?" said the squire.

"I did," said Job. "I wouldn't ha' done it, but he was drawing a straight bead on Bill Manton, and I had to shoot an' spile it."

"Aiming at Bill! Did he hit him?" exclaimed the squire.

"Wal, yes, he did hit him, but he sin't hurt bad, and I fetched him right along with me to the house."

Whether or not there was any intentional malice in the way the little hermit told his story to the listeners at the barn, or whether he knew who heard him, would be difficult to have guessed from his wooden features; but one fair face near by turned deadly pale as he spoke, and one pair of rosy lips parted in a sharp exclamation of pain.

The next moment and Sally Van Lennep was darting across the well-trodden snow toward the house; and, in yet another, Bill Manton was astonished by a clasp of arms around his neck, and an anxious voice crying:

"Oh, Bill, are you hurt?"

"Why, no, Sally, I ain't hurt a bit! Who told you so?"

"Job Launt!" exclaimed the abashed and wounded girl, in a quick revulsion of feeling. Her hands were before her blushing face now, and the tears were coming through her fingers.

That was enough, and more than enough, for Bill Manton, and he, too, forgot the presence of all others, as he said, in a tone of voice that Sally Van Lennep understood:

"Well, yes, Sally: I did get a bullet across my side, but it don't amount to anything. Two or three inches to the left, now, and you'd have been clean rid of me; but as it is, I've come back to help you fight off the Sioux."

"Sally's hands were down again, as if there were something marvelously reassuring in the fact that Bill had actually been in danger and been wounded, and she replied:

"Oh, I'm so glad you are here!"

"Aleck will be here, too," said Bill, in a low voice.

"I hope not!—I do—indeed, I do!" exclaimed Sally. "We shall do better without him."

"Perhaps so," said Bill; "for he'll come with the redskins when they come. I don't reckon he'll git jest what he's comin' for, though. Not right off."

The hours of the wintry day had been slow enough in passing, but they were nearly gone by the time Job Launt finished his inspection of the premises; and under his careful supervision all things had been made to maintain as peaceful an appearance as possible. He had even taken a hand of his own at the "one lone fiddle" of the settlement, and the music thereof could have been heard by red ears or white at no inconsiderable distance.

Any one approaching the ample homestead would at once have understood that those within were having a high time of it. It was not on that road, nor at that season of the year, that random wayfarers were likely to come, however, and the "neighbors" were already nearly all there—all who had dared to come at all.

And yet, just as the sun was sinking in the West, the several approaches to Squire Van Lennep's were rapidly becoming peopled—strangely, weirdly, horribly peopled—by dark, fantastic forms, that flitted from tree to tree, crouched and crept from bush to bush, pushing swiftly forward with a silence that was marvelous, and seeming to move in perfect concert with one another.

They heard the lively music of Job Launt's fiddle, and the sound of voices which now and then arose with it.

They saw the smoke curling from the wide-mouthed chimney; they took note of the unusual collection of sleighs, and of the horses in the sheds; and all seemed to be about as they expected.

Now and then there were brief and hurried consultations among their leaders, and these latter were upon their faces, as did most of their followers also, expressions of grim and wondrous triumph and almost uncontrollable exultation.

"Quilting bee," indeed!

Whatever might be the nature of the settlers' merrymaking, these dark new-comers looked forward to a feast of blood and carnage, to an unchecked orgie of lust and cruelty and vengeance. More than two hundred chosen warriors of the Sioux, and they did not mean to leave a home unburned, or a pale-face unscalped, from end to end of Shelter Hill Valley.

Inside the house the fiddling was in Job Launt's control, but it was all he could do to keep up the other symptoms of merriment, or to keep down the hasty spirit of the younger men, who could ill bear the restraint he deemed necessary.

At the big barn all was quiet and still; and here the very flower of the Valley Men were gathered, under the leadership of Bill Manton.

"Steady, boys," said the young frontiersman, in a low, clear tone, that was heard by all. "Unless I'm greatly mistaken, they're gatherin' for a rush. Tell ye what, if they had taken us unawares, we'd be at their mercy in about three minutes. We've got our work cut out for us as it is. Steady! Here they come! Pull out the plugs—ready—now let 'em get well in—fire away, and don't waste a shot!"

Even as Bill had been speaking the dark cloud of the Sioux had burst out from under cover of the woods, and now, with wild, fierce, heart-piercing yells, they were dashing—charging. More than one woman's voice—sister or mother or wife—arose from the house in shrieks of uncontrollable dread, and if, as Bill had said, there had been less of forewarning and preparation, the plans of Yellow Wolf and his warriors would have met with instant and complete success. No haste, unorganized resistance would have checked the fierceness of that savage rush, and the surprise, too, might have been complete. As it was now, however, just at the moment when the Sioux imagined their prey altogether secure, and their glorious massacre of defenseless white settlers about to begin, the sound of the fiddle suddenly died away, and, as if that had been the preconcerted signal, scores of loopholes in the house and barn bristled with dark muzzles.

No haste, no quick and boyish "blazing away," but the riflemen of Shelter Hill Valley sought each one for his proper mark before he pulled his trigger, and more than one whooping redskin fluttered his death-cry within twenty feet of the house.

Scarcely comprehending the full truth at first, the savages pushed on to the very doors, and even the fagot-carriers dashed down their huge rolls of blazing birch-bark and pitch-pine according to their instructions. The black, stifling smoke rose fast, for Yellow Wolf understood "fire," and no less than fifty of his men had been detailed to this peculiar branch of the proposed destruction.

Loud rose the yells, and the red men also plied their weapons vigorously, but they were taken at too terrible a disadvantage. Very nearly secure from harm, behind their log walls, the Valley Men loaded and fired as coolly as at a turkey-shoot, only more rapidly, and the "range" was horribly close. Down they went, in quick succession, whole groups of them at once, the painted heroes of many a border foray and midnight massacre, and old Job Launt fairly jumped up and down with delight as he peered through his loophole. A gleam of something like insanity was in his eyes, and he shouted:

"Give it to 'em. That was the way they came to

my house, a dozen years ago, when thar wasn't any-body at home that could stop 'em. They murdered, and they scalped, and they burned, just as they meant to do here. But they won't do it this time. Ha!" And Job Launt now, for the first time, suddenly pitched his rifle-muzzle through the hole and fired.

"I knew him, in spite of his paint," he shouted, "and I only fired at the Indian half of him. If the white half didn't want to get hurt, it ort to hev kep' out o' bad company!"

Self-deceived as they had been for a few moments, and blinded by wrath and disappointment as much as by the smoke of the fires they had lighted, the Sioux were going down too fast to be any longer in doubt about the matter. Somehow or other a trap had been laid for them, and they had fallen into it like so many wild animals. The very angel of death seemed after them, and now the great doors of the barn were suddenly thrown open, and Manton and his men came pouring out. To the eyes of the panic-struck and bewildered savages there was a regiment of them, and they broke and fled in all directions.

"Foller 'em! Close in on 'em!" shouted Bill. "Don't give 'em a chance to rally nigh to the clearing. Job Launt, you and the squire and the rest, come out and try to save the house."

Bill was a good captain, if the old hermit was a crafty and cunning counselor, and less than half as many redskins got away from Shelter Hill Valley as had come into it that morning.

Nor were the survivors at all disposed to linger or dispute about the matter, for their chief himself and their best warriors had fallen under the rifles of the settlers in Job Launt's trap, and the remainder had scarcely pluck enough left to get home on.

Bill Manton did not abandon the pursuit until he felt sure there would be no rally, and by the time he returned to the house the danger from the fire had also disappeared. Log walls do not kindle well, and the fagots had been dragged away to burn themselves out at their leisure.

"Do you see him thar, with his painted face?" exclaimed old Job, in a hoarse whisper, as he grasped the arm of Bill Manton on his arrival. "That's Aleck Sanders. I never drew a bead on a white man in my life, but the white half of that villain was in bad company. It's that way with more fellers than you'd think on. He's dead, now, both sides of him. But, Bill, hev you seen the squire? Thar's only two of our fellers killed, and less'n a dozen hurt a little; but the squire's hit in some bad place or other. Come and see him."

Bill needed no urging, and in a moment more he was in the smuggery of an office, and the squire lay on the floor before him, groaning heavily. Nevertheless, he raised himself as Bill came in, and said:

"Leave the room, Sally; I've something to say to Bill."

"Oh, tell me if you are unhurt!" whispered Sally to Bill, as she passed him; and he might well have been forgiven that his answer was only a hasty kiss and a "No, dear, God bless you!"

Sally went out with a radiant face, but the squire beckoned Bill close to him and whispered:

"Is Aleck Sanders dead?"

"Dead as a door-nail," said Bill.

"Does anybody suspect who killed him?" asked the squire, with a strong effort and a shudder.

"Suspect? I don't know what you mean!" said Bill. "Job Launt shot him. Everybody knows that. He and I were just examining the wound."

"Job shot him? I was mistaken, then! Oh, I was afraid I had taken the life of my—heavens and earth! what was I saying? Job shot him? Well, I ain't sorry he's dead. He was always a trouble to me. Such a devil he was! Job knew all about it, and he's akin to us, far away. Never mind, Bill; I don't feel so bad as I did. It's only a buckshot in my leg, and won't lame for a fortnight. Go and see Sally. She don't know anything about Aleck. No more do you, Bill Manton. It was Job shot him."

Bill was glad enough to obey the squire, nor did he and Sally Van Leunep have the slightest difficulty in forgetting their previous differences in their joy over the successful issue of the "hermit's Plot."

DIVING, PAST AND PRESENT.

[Continued.]

MR. BRUNEL, the celebrated engineer who constructed the Thames Tunnel, had, during the time that work was in progress, an adventure which showed him the advantage of breathing condensed air.

The water of the Thames had broken through and flooded the tunnel, and Mr. Brunel found it necessary to go down in a diving-bell from the surface of the river, to examine the aperture made by the irruption of the water into the tunnel.

Having got into the bell Mr. Brunel descended to a depth of thirty feet, when he found the mouth of the opening too narrow to admit of the machine going lower down, and he wished to go some eight or ten feet lower.

In this dilemma Brunel caught hold of a rope and dived out of the bell in which he had just been breathing compressed air; he remained so long, however, that his companion in the bell grew alarmed, and gave a signal which caused Mr. Brunel to rise.

He found then that he had been two minutes under the water, and on repeating the experiment, he was enabled to remain a still longer time immersed.

On considering this the great engineer could only account for it by the fact that the air in the diving-bell was much condensed, and thus supplied his lungs for a longer period than if he had been breathing the ordinary atmosphere.

And this, no doubt, was the reason why the sponge fishers of the Mediterranean were able to remain so long beneath the water.

But nowadays there is no need for them to acquire the art of holding the breath for such a long time, as divers clad in waterproof dresses and helmets, which are connected by means of tubes with air-pumps on board vessels above, go down to the bottom, and remain there for hours at a time, sending up basket after basket of sponge or coral, which they gather from the rocks below.

But about the time that Smeaton was bringing his diving-bell to something like practical utility, a certain Benjamin Martin, who began life as a plowboy in Surrey, but who had educated himself and had become a celebrated optician and globe maker in Fleet Street, was at work on an aquatic suit of clothing, which he designed should supersede the diving-bell.

This submarine dress was made of strong leather, so prepared with various varnishes, etc., that no water could penetrate. It fitted the wearer's arms and legs, but was bulky enough about the body to contain half a hogshead of air; in the front part was a glass, which enabled the wearer to see before him.

When dressed in this the wearer could walk at the bottom of the sea, and, of course, enter the cabins of sunken vessels for the purpose of recovering valuable property.

Although Martin was tolerably successful with this diving dress, it was not yet destined to supersede the bell. Others, however, were working to perfect it.

A certain Mr. Kleingert, of Breslau, in Germany, published in 1728 a description of a diving dress designed by him.

This was a metallic armor of strong tin plate in the form of a cylinder, which inclosed the wearer's head and body, the cylinder being made in two parts for the more easy putting on and taking off. Besides this, the diver had a jacket and drawers of leather, perfectly waterproof.

The metal cylinder relieved the diver from the pressure of the water on his body, with the exception of his legs; and, thus equipped, a man named Joachim entered the river Oder, near Breslau, on the 24th June, 1798.

He remained at the bottom of the river some time, and sawed through a submerged tree, which had proved a great obstacle to the navigation of the stream.

Many spectators witnessed the performance.

In spite of these diving dresses, however, when Mr. Rennie, the engineer, was entrusted with the construction of Howth harbor, Mr. Rennie used a bell suspended from a kind of railway scaffolding such as may be seen in use at any of the large building works.

By means of this apparatus, aided by ropes attached to the stones, and managed by the men in the bell, the submarine masonry could be, and was, executed with the greatest facility.

Some years ago five kinds of diving-dresses were tried—of which three were English and two were French—in every variety of situation.

The apparatus which was attended with the most successful result, and which, it was decided, possessed the greatest facilities, was that exhibited by Mr. Heinke.

A FOX HUNT EXTRAORDINARY.

The diver, without any assistance, raised himself to the surface by partly closing the valve in the breastplate of the helmet; the compressed air thus filled the waterproof dress and brought him up.

When he wished to descend he had only to turn on the air-valve.

In order to test the alertness of the divers twelve small rings were thrown into the river; of these Heinke's diver picked up ten, and the other two were not found by any of the divers.

Again, at the request of Prince Napoleon, he went down with a helmet, the glass of which had been accidently broken at the Westminster Bridge Works, and which, of course, admitted water.

He immediately closed the safety-valve, as directed, and remained under water half an hour before coming to the surface.

The underclothing was then examined, and was found to be perfectly dry.

The divers representing the other makers were then requested to submit their apparatus to the same test, but they all declined.

The French exhibitor, M. Ernoux, at once and in the most handsome manner, acknowledged the superiority of the English apparatus, stating that he considered it perfect.

To show the perfection to which the apparatus has been brought, when the famous watch robbery took place at Walk-er's, in Cornhill, London, a woman, being hotly pursued by the police, threw a number of watches over Blackfriar's Bridge into the river.

Now it would not be a very easy matter to find a watch in a soft, muddy bed, as the specific gravity of the gold would cause it to sink in the soil. How much more difficult then must it be when in the water?

Nevertheless, ten of the watches were recovered from the bed of the Thames, and as some of them were of considerable value, the returns well repaid the outlay.

SWIMMING.

AN expert lays down the following rules for the guidance of those who wish to become proficients in the art of side-swimming:

"Lay the face and body well down sideways in the water, with the mouth a little raised, so that you may breathe freely. It matters not which side you swim on, the plan of proceeding being of course the same. The hand most be used as a cut-water, taking care that when you project it from the shoulder, you send your legs out at the same time. Let the other arm rest close to the body, till you have had some practice with one hand, then commence using both hands. The upper hand is to be employed solely to propel the body, while the under hand acts both as a propeller and a cut-water."

Another authority says:

"Since the side-stroke has become so popular, a good swimmer seldom swims on the breast, although you must gain confidence with the breast stroke before attempting the side; also acquire the power of swimming under water. Lay yourself on your side, and draw your hands up to your chest, as in the chest stroke, then the right hand must be thrust out to its full extent, the left hand only going about as far as the elbow of the right arm; next, the thumb should be tightened over the forefinger of the left hand so as to form a cavity or scoop, which gives a much greater power over the water; a stroke with that hand should then be taken back to the thigh, using your full power with this stroke, the right hand taking a downward stroke, which act propels you along. The arms are then drawn up into the first position; at this movement you should inhale sufficient air to well fill your lungs, at the same time as your arms are being drawn up to the first position, draw your legs up to your body, and as the arms are struck out as before described, so shoot out the legs, taking care not to let the feet come out of the water; or if so, the power of the leg-stroke will be quite lost."

In commencing it is not advised that more than five or six strokes should be taken, then a few should be taken on the chest, and as you become more expert, you can increase the number of strokes, until the side swimming becomes the natural mode of progressing through the water, to the exclusion almost of any other style, unless you may happen to be in a sea-way, when the chest stroke will be found the preferable, from its keeping the head and face so well raised out of the water and surf.

The principal feature in this side-stroke is to keep your head in exactly the same position in relation to the body as when walking, and not to raise it up and down, as most inexperienced swimmers do, giving as a reason for so doing that it is to prevent the water from touching their faces or going into their mouths, instead of closing their mouths and pushing their heads through the water, the apex of the head being used as the cut-water in advance, to ease the progress of the body through the resisting water.

By lifting up the head the way or impetus is stopped, just as in a rowing or sailing boat, any rolling or other motion other than advancing tends greatly to impede her progress; therefore, on exactly the same principle, when swimming, the body and head should not move, only the arms and legs, as propellers.

Being on the side, and in the proper position for this stroke, it is impossible to see ahead, you should therefore steer yourself by an object behind you, ly occasionally making a slight turn of the head, you can easily see that you are keeping in the right direction, or what is in your way.

Care should be taken in turning the head that it

TALKS WITH BOYS ABOUT FOREIGN LANDS.—AUSTRALIA.—NEW SOUTH WALES.—SCENE ON THE MURRAY RIVER.—SEE PAGE 206.

is not done suddenly, but gradually, as any sudden turn is sure to check your speed.

Having, by thorough practice, acquired a complete mastery over the side-stroke plan of swimming, the learner may proceed to a modified, but what by some is thought to be a more powerful, mode of swimming called in some cases, "the Indian stroke," because generally used by the North American Indians; by others it is called "thrusting," the latter used when the arm is thrust forward, the former when it swings; the action is like an almost continuous stroke; as in a screw-propeller, the position is just the same as in the side-stroke, the only difference being in the stroke of the arm.

Whichever side you swim on, the directions will do for, merely reversing the sides and the actions of the hands and arms.

In the "Indian-stroke," the left hand commences from the thigh, with palm of the hand up, and concave; the hand is then drawn out of the water, very steadily, to the full extent of the arm, ahead of you, replacing the hand in the water, palm downward, where the full power of the stroke is given back to the thigh; then the right hand is wound in a circular stroke from the right side to the left chest, and as the left hand rises out of the water, draw the right hand back to the right side, ready to strike out; these strokes are made simultaneously, the legs working with the arms, thus a continuous stroke is obtained.

This is rather a showy style of swimming, but some people don't care much for it. The swimmer is certainly propelled very rapidly for a while, but it requires such a great amount of exertion that the swimmer tires ere he has gone any very great distance, or practiced it for long.

In a race for prizes some time since, the effects of this stroke on the powers of a swimmer's endurance were well marked. One competitor went easily ahead of all his antagonists, and all expected him to have won easily, and so he would, had the course been a short one; but, unfortunately for him, it was rather long, and consequently, when he had proceeded over about half the distance, his tremendous exertions told on him, and he became wild and irregular in his strokes, so that before very long those of his companions who had swum steadily along gradually overtook him, and when about two-thirds of the distance had been done he was passed by two of them; the result of the race being that, though when half-way over the course he was well in advance, at the finish he was not even placed.

Another kind of fancy swimming is to turn *Head-over-Heels*. The body is curved or bent at the hips, and the hands being straightened along the sides, are used as if throwing the water over the back; by this you drive the head under, at the same time using the feet as in ordinary swimming, the result being that you make a complete somersault, or turn head-over-heels.

Heels-over-Head is done by the swimmer when lying on his back, drawing his legs up with the knees straight, and then by paddling very sharply with his hands, bringing his feet over his head, and the body being overbalanced, a complete revolution is effected.

Sometimes two swimmers join in making a *Double Wheel*. This is done by interlacing their feet and knees, and then, whilst keeping their bodies apart, they each use their right hands with great power and their left hands as sustaining paddles, thus making revolutions in a large circle.

The Float is the name given to a very useful method which should be practiced more frequently than it is. It is done as follows: When one swimmer lies on his back with feet stretched out, another takes him by the feet and propels him forward—a most useful exercise to know in cases of cramp or danger.

Another mode, called *The Plank*, varies only a little from the above, and is done by two swimmers; one places himself flat on his back with feet widely apart, hands close to his body and the head well up, his companion takes hold just above his ankles and pulls at them, and at the same time impels himself, and, if correctly done, one swimmer will quickly pass over the other.

Leap-Frog is another amusing way of swimming, and is practiced by one swimmer treading water, whilst his companion swims up to him, then laying both hands on his head, he gives a shove downward, and whilst his companion sinks he passes on, and then treading water himself offers a "back" in his turn, just as it had been given him before.

There are many other feats performed in the water, as the "Wrestler," the "Driver," "Pick-a-back," etc., but the foregoing are those usually practiced by good swimmers.

Races of all kinds, and diving for objects thrown into the water, are very common amusements, but they frequently induce swimmers to make too severe efforts, which, joined to a long continuance in the water, are often very injurious.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SAVING DROWNING PERSONS.

1. When you approach a person drowning in the water assure him, with a loud and firm voice, that he is safe.

2. Before jumping in to save him, divest yourself, as far, and as quickly as you possibly can, of all clothes; tear them off if necessary, but if there is not time, loose, at all events, the foot of your drawers, if they are tied, as, if you do not do so, they will fill with water and drag you.

3. On swimming to a person in the sea, if he be struggling, do not seize him then, but keep off for a few seconds, till he gets quiet, which will be after he gets a few mouthfuls of water; for it is sheer madness to take hold of a man when he is struggling in the water, and if you do, you run a great risk.

4. Then get close to him, and take fast hold of the hair of his head, turn him as quickly as possible on to his back, give him a sudden pull, and this will cause him to float; then throw yourself on your back also, and swim for the shore, both hands having hold of his hair, you on your back, and he on his also, and of course his back to your breast. In this way you will get sooner and safer to the shore than by any other means, and you can easily swim thus with two or three persons; the writer has often, as an experiment, done it with four, and gone with them forty or fifty yards into the sea.

One great advantage of this method is that it enables you to keep your head up, and also to hold up the head of the person you are trying to save. It is of primary importance that you take fast hold of the hair, and throw both the persons and yourself on your backs. After many experiments this is found to be vastly preferable to all other methods. You can in this manner float nearly as long as you please, or until a boat or other help can be obtained.

5. I believe there is no such thing as a death-grasp—at least it must be unusual, for I have seen many persons drowned and have never witnessed it. As soon as a drowning man begins to get feeble, and to lose his recollection, he gradually slackens his hold till he quits it altogether. No apprehension need therefore be felt on that head when attempting to rescue a drowning person.

6. After a person has sunk to the bottom, if the water be smooth, the exact position where the body is may be known by the air-bubbles which will occasionally rise to the surface, allowance being made for the motion of the water, if in a tide-way or stream, which will have carried the bubbles out of a perpendicular course in rising to the surface. A body may be often regained from the bottom before too late for recovery, by diving for it in the direction indicated by these bubbles.

7. On rescuing a person by diving to the bottom the hair of the head should be seized by one hand only, and the other used in conjunction with the feet in raising yourself and the drowning person to the surface.

8. If in the sea, it may sometimes be a great error to try and get to land. If there be a strong "outsetting" tide, and you are swimming by yourself, or having hold of a person who cannot swim, then get on to your back and float till help comes. Many a man exhausts himself by stemming the billows from the shore on a back-going tide, and sinks in the effort, where, if he had floated, a boat or other aid might have been obtained.

9. These instructions apply alike to all circumstances, whether the roughest sea or smooth water.

10. In case you are roughly seized by a drowning man when attempting his rescue, the best thing to do is to dive with him at once, as this is almost sure to make him let you go, as he won't like the sensation of going to the bottom; but, in the event of his sticking to you as a last resort, a smart rap or two on his head will make him quiet, and enable you to save him in safety. I was on one occasion seized by a maniac, who had attempted suicide, and I want to save him, when, as he would not let me go, I, as a last resource, punched his head soundly, and then was able to save him, entirely through his being reduced to a quiet state, for if I had not done so he would have drowned us both.

[To be continued.]

DIVING, PAST AND PRESENT.—DIVERS AT WORK.

FOX-HUNT EXTRAORDINARY.

A BRIGHT Canadian day; the short Summer, hot and fiery, just closed its fervid reign; nature preparing for the graceful Indian Summer, with which, like a successful prima donna, she reappears before the curtain to bid you a last farewell.

The blue, sea-like expanse of Ontario lay in sight of the house where a party of friends were idling their time. The conversation reverted to scenes beyond the water. The excitement of a fox-hunt would just be in keeping; and even Mrs. Grantly, who had more than once followed the hounds, expressed her regret that distance made the sport unattainable, the New World not appreciating the exhilarating enjoyment of such wild pursuit of a brush.

Captain Cayngham looked from the window. A fine stretch of country opened before him, where a run would be splendid, undulations sufficient to avoid monotony, fence and ditch and gully to test both horse and rider.

"By Jove!" he cried, "let us try it."

"Try what?" responded Fullerton, toying with papers he had exhausted an hour before.

"Why, a fox-hunt!"

At that there was a general laugh.

"Where is the fox, and where are the hounds, my boy?"

"Oh, that we will easily arrange. You see, the real fox is only a myth. You do not care for the animal itself, and a substitute can easily enough be made."

"I see," said Swingston; "you propose to take the cat, who is quietly dozing there in the sun."

"Not a bit of it, my boy; she hasn't half the spirit of my fox. My idea is to take a paper balloon, and give it chase. I will wager that we can get as much sport out of it to-day as our friends across the Atlantic will out of a real fox; and then, hounds being unnecessary, we need but our horses."

A general hurrah followed, and we were soon in full chase of our fox. And such a scene was never witnessed. As current after current took the balloon, our course became winding and involved enough, and put our horses truly to their mettle—such dodgings and plunging, such stumping and failure never befell a lot of fox-hunters. But we had a glorious run of it, and when at last our fox was run down, and gracefully presented, bodily, in lieu of brush, to the lady of the party, we rode gayly home, having effectually cured the *ennui* of the day.

LEOPARDS AND LEOPARD-HUNTING.

THOUGH leopards, owing to their inferior size and strength, are not dreaded in India to anything like the same extent as tigers, yet they are equally savage when driven by hunger to assail man, and some hundreds of human beings annually fall victims to them.

The cheetah, or hunting leopard (*Felis jubata* of Linnæus) is often confounded with the leopard

proper (*Felis pardus*), though it is a distinct species.

The inhabitants of Ceylon hunt them for their beautiful skins, for besides the spotted variety there are in that island pure black leopards, and also catch them in traps and pitfalls, and occasionally in spring cages formed of stakes driven firmly into the ground, having a kid fastened within as a bait.

The door of this cage is held open by a sapling bent down by the united force of several men, and so arranged as to act as a spring, while to it is attached a cord formed of plaited deer-hide. The cries of the kid attract the leopard, which, in trying to get at the tempting bait, is inclosed by the liberation of the spring and grasped firmly round the body by the noose.

Leopards frequent the vicinity of pasture-lands in quest of the deer and other peaceful animals which resort to them, and their depredations cause serious losses to the natives, among whose flocks and herds they play havoc.

The natives have a curious but firm conviction that when a bullock is killed by a leopard, and falls with its right side uppermost, the animal will not return to devour it. On this head Sir Emerson Tennent says:

"I have been told by English sportsmen (some of whom share in the popular belief) that sometimes, when they have proposed to watch by the carcass of a bullock recently killed by a leopard, in the hope of shooting the spoiler on his return in search of his prey, the native owner of the slaughtered animal, though earnestly desiring to be avenged, has assured them that it would be in vain, as, the beast having fallen on its right side, the leopard would not return."

Like the tigers, when supplied with plenty of food in the jungle, the leopard flies from the face of man, though when ravenous they will carry off men, and once having acquired a thirst for human blood, they have been known to keep a district in terror. The leopard will climb a tree after its prey, and two instances are recorded of a cheetah having carried off men placed on a stage erected in a tree for the purpose of driving off elephants from the rice-fields at night. These animals entertain a strong predigtion for dogs, and they often at night seize these faithful companions of man from within one's veranda or tent, when the occupant is out on a shooting expedition in the jungles.

In proof of the statement that leopards will not attack man, and that their first impulse on being suddenly confronted is to try to effect their escape, the following anecdote is related by Major Skinner, who resided upward of forty years in the interior of Ceylon:

"On the occasion of one of my visits to Adam's Peak in the prosecution of my military reconnoissances of the mountain zone, I fixed on a pretty little patena (meadow) in the midst of an extensive and dense forest in the southern segment of the Peak range as a favorable spot for operations. It would have been difficult, after descending from the cone of the peak, to have found one's way to this point in the midst of so vast a wilderness of trees, had not this experience assured me that good game tracks would be found leading to it, and by one of them I reached it.

"It was in the afternoon, just after one of those tropical sun-showers which decorate every branch and blade with dew-bespangled brilliants, and this little patena was covered with game, either driven to the open space by the drippings from the leaves or tempted by the freshness of the pasture; there were several pairs of elk, the bearded antlered male contrasting gracefully with his female; various varieties of game in a profusion not to be found in any place frequented by man. It was some time before I could allow them to be disturbed by the rude fall of the ax, in our necessity to establish a bivouac for the night, and while engaged were accustomed to danger that it was long before they took alarm at our noises.

"The following morning, anxious to gain a height in time to avail myself of the clear atmosphere of sunrise for my observations, I started to force myself through the jungle, leaving orders for my men, with my surveying instruments, to follow my track by the notches which I cut in the bark of the trees. On leaving the plain I availed myself of a fine wide game track, which led in my direction, and had gone perhaps half a mile from the camp, when I was startled by a slight rustling in the niloo (a species of the *Acanthacea* which grows abundantly in the mountain ranges of Ceylon) to my right, and in an instant, by the spring of a magnificent leopard which, in a bound of full eight feet in height over the low brushwood, lighted at my feet within eighteen inches of the spot whereon I stood, and lay in a crouching position, his fiery gleaming eyes fixed on me.

"The predicament was not a pleasant one. I had no weapon of defense, and with one spring or blow of his paw the beast could have annihilated me. To move I knew would only encourage his attack. It occurred to me at the moment that I had heard of the power of man's eye over wild animals, and accordingly I fixed my gaze as intently as the agitation of such a moment enabled me on his eyes; we stared at each other for some seconds, when to my inexpressible joy the beast turned and bounded down the straight open path before me. This scene occurred just at that period of the morning when the grazing animals retired from the open patena to the cool shade of the forest; and, unbeknown to me, the leopard had taken my approach for that of a deer or some such animal. And if his spring had been at a quadruped, instead of a biped, his distance was so well measured that it must have landed him on the neck of a deer, an elk, or a buffalo; as it was, one pace would have done for me. A bear would not have let his victim off so easily."

At the court of Hyder Ali, and his son Tippoo Sultaun, leopards used to be trapped and brought into the arena to combat with the royal tiger of the Carnatic by fighting one of its own species, or some other wild animal. On one occasion a savage brute, after killing the enemy against which it was pitted bounded over the low wall of the inclosure, and in the middle of the orchestra, scattered the musicians right and left; it was with difficulty dispatched after having seriously injured two unfortunate men. Until firearms superseded bows and arrows, the native hunters of Southern India used to kill leopards and other carnivora with the latter. They usually hunted in parties of four, and being very expert shots with these primitive weapons, managed to earn a living by the sale of the skins of the animals.

We remember reading an account of the method adopted by these hunters, who displayed much ready courage in attacking the most savage beasts in their native forests with such indifferent weapons; to engage a tiger with a double breechloader requires no little nerve; how much more then with a bow and arrow?

Any time of the year is favorable for the operations of these hunters except during the *monsoons*, between the months of June and September, when the force of the rain carries everything before it, and the rivulets swell into deep streams, and the dry nullahs become roaring streams.

Having fixed upon a likely spot, generally in the vicinity of some running stream, they mark out a space of ground about twenty yards square, at each corner of which they dig a hole of such a depth that he can stand upright in it with head and shoulders above the surface of the ground.

These holes are made only just wide enough to admit of its occupant sitting at the bottom with his knees doubled up to his head; the only articles he takes with him are his bow and quiver of arrows, a short stout lance, which, however, is only brought into use in a great emergency, and a long sharp knife or dagger, by which the animal, when mortally wounded, is dispatched and skinned.

These four holes being dug, the sides are first plastered up with clay and small stones and pieces of wood so as to make them of a compact and uniform diameter from top to bottom, and then with mixed cow-dung and water, similar to what they plaster the roofs and walls of their houses with; the men, having secured the pits from the intrusion of wild animals by strewing over their mouths large branches of trees thickly covered with thorns, return to their village after having marked the spot for future operations. At the end of a week or so, by which time the clay and the stones and manure have formed a strong, dry cement, resembling the sides of the pit as hard and secure as if built with bricks and mortar, the hunters return to the spot, leading with them a he-goat, too aged to be of any further use, and too tough to be converted into curried mutton. The old ram is intended as a decoy, and is carefully muzzled until the party have reached their destination. Arrived here, the goat is driven into the inclosure, and a peg having been firmly driven into the ground in the very centre, the victim is secured to it by a rope made fast round his neck. This done, heaps of grass and other provender are placed within his reach, so that he may satisfy his hunger by a last luxurious meal; the muzzle is now removed, and the goat, who has been half starved for the last few days, falls to work, doubtless wondering what all this unwonted kindness may mean; but not having read Virgil, his fears are not awakened by the memory of the passage commencing "Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes."

While the goat is feasting, the men are engaged clearing away all the rubbish from their hiding-places, and this having been completed, they strip their bows for action and quickly ensconce themselves in the holes, each man facing in a different direction, so as to command an unobstructed view of the surrounding jungle. Presently, Mister Billy, having eaten his fill, becomes alive to a consciousness of his loneliness, and begins to awake the echoes of the forest with his mournful bleatings. This is just as it should be, and the native watchers are on the alert to catch the first sounds of the rustling of a tiger or leopard among the forest leaves as they approach, as they usually a long time to wait. Other sounds also announce the approach of these dreaded forest lords. The jungle fowl flies away with a whirr; the peacock screams a warning note; the monkeys, who have been gambolling and chattering freely at the intrusion of their "cousins ever so far removed," betake themselves to the upper branches of the trees, and wax grave in the presence of the formidable quadruped; the wild boar, and the elk, and the spotted deer, with his doe fly precipitately from before the face of the coming foe; and the melancholy wail of the jackal and the wild dog warns of approaching danger. The crackling of the dried leaves becomes more distinct; and the four hunters hold their bows ready for action and quickly ascertain in what direction whence comes the approaching animal, now crouch down into their narrow cells. Presently there is a terrific roar which appears to shake the leaves of the forest, and the savage monster, leaping high through the air, descends within a few feet of the goat. The wretched victim is paralyzed with terror, and has not power to bring out a single bleat for mercy from its pitiless foe. Another moment, and its assailant takes a second bound, which lands him on the throat of his helpless prey.

But the death-gurgle of the goat is the signal for the native hunters, who, quick as thought, spring up, and taking deliberate aim, let fly four arrows simultaneously at the

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1. Wind. 2. Chain, Haste, Askew, Items, Newsy. 3. S, Act, Aches, Schemes, Tempo, Ice, S. 4. Brain, Grain, Drain, Train. 5. Mur-mur. 6. Zulus, Annoy—ZebrA, UnicorN, LioN, UndO, SlaverY. 7. Ante-l-pate. 8. Zebra, Eared. Bread, Head-e, Adder. 9. Lip-pin-cot. 10. Pat-ri(r)e)arch.

WINNERS OF PRIZES IN No. 645.

1.—J. Lowe, Circleville, O.

2.—F. C. Lockey, Morrisiana, N. Y.

3.—W. Burrowes, London, Ont.

ENIGMAS, CHARADES, ETC.

1.—ENIGMA.

SHARP teeth I have, yet never eat I food;
Though having teeth, yet lack I tongue and lips.
Able am I to gnaw through hardest wood,
And bite the hardest marble into chips.

An adage and a proverb too, am I
Like "modern instances" am often "wise";
And many a grain of wit you may espy
In my brief mottoes if you use your eyes.

2.—SQUARE WORDS.

A girl's name my first will be;
In next what's thin or lean you'll see;
For third, who tends the sick put down,
In village, city, or in town;
What means to follow in fourth you'll find,
If to seek it you would be so kind;
My last's a word which means to guide
When out upon the ocean wide.

3.—DECAPITATION.

Beheaded's wife wore whole one day
In whole with head and tail away.
'Twas not as large as whole curtailed, you know,
But as what that fruit again curtailed will show.

4.—CHARADE.

My first, if you would like to know,
Then to the seashore you must go;
If you would see its varied form,
Your visit make in wind and storm.

My second in numbers small you'll find,
Though valued highest of its kind;
At evening parties, when 'tis seen,
It's valued higher than the queen.

My whole may be seen everywhere,
In field, or forest, in street or square;
Inside you seek for it in vain,
But inside out, 'tis there again.

5.—TRANSPOSITION.

To this we all are liable:
It comes in many forms and shapes;
Mankind and all that's animal,
There's scarcely one that quite escapes.

Transpose, now when with first afflicted,
A mouth or two at this to spend
(I'm sure it can't be contradicted)
Is beneficial in the end.

6.—CHARADE.

My first is used to signify motion,
By horse on land, or steam on ocean.
My second is given by acclamation,
To a great singer in a foreign nation.
And passing thus from mouth to mouth,
The name still greets her from north to south.
My whole is a lady of high degree,
Famous in song and story.
Who, to set her people free,
Did a shameful act with glory

7.—DIAMOND PUZZLE.

A consonant; to go fast; to pardon; a medicinal plant and a vowel; a place for a statue; an article; a pronoun.

8.—TRIPLE ACROSTIC.

Primals should centrals freely give
That wretched finals, too, may live.

Not this does the miser for poverty care;
This but the poor Esquimaux needs must use;
This Spanish name in California choose;
A nickname which a Western State can spare.

9.—CHARADE.

Let one hundred and fifty be,
And a girl's name then you'll see.

10.—CHARADE.

Repair a large town, and sad, sir, for you,
Not a word you say will be put down as true.

FUN FOR THE BOYS.

NEAR Dumfries lived a pious family who had adopted as an orphan who was regarded as half witted. He had imbibed strict views on religious matters however, and once asked his adopted mother if she did not think it wrong for the people to come to church and fall asleep, paying no better regard to the service. She replied she did. Accordingly, before going to church the next Sunday, he filled his pockets with apples. One bald-headed old man, who invariably went to sleep during the sermon, particularly attracted his attention. Seeing him at last nodding and giving nasal evidence of being in the "land of dreams," he struck the astounded sleeper a blow with an apple on the top of his bald pate. The minister and aroused congregation at once turned round and indignantly gazed at the boy, who merely said to the preacher, as he took another apple in his hand, with a sober, honest expression of countenance, "You preach; I'll keep 'em awake."

WHEN a man has no bills against him he feels as though he belongs to the nobility.

INSTRUCTOR IN LOGIC (attempting to illustrate intention and extension): "Now, Mr. A., what is the intention of 'the dog'?" *Diligent Pupil No. 1:* "A.—sir, that depends upon circumstances; he may be intending to bite you, or——" "That will do for you, sir. Mr. B., what is the extension of 'the dog'?" *Diligent Pupil No. 2* (sure of a dead rush): "His tail, sir!"

TWO BROTHERS of the name of Lawes, on creating a disturbance at the Dublin Theatre, were called to order by the celebrated Felix M'Carthy, who was in the same box. One of them, presenting his card, said, "You shall hear from one of us—our name is Lawes." "Lawes, is it?" quoth Felix. "Then I'll give you an addition to your name;" and, exerting his well-known strength, he handed them both out of the box, exclaiming, "Now, by the powers, you're both outlaws!"

WHICH is the most wonderful animal in the farmyard? A pig, because he is killed first and cured afterward.

THE Commonwealth of Maine is making great strides in educational progress. A young lady in a Portland grammar school, to whom was assigned the task of writing a composition which should contain the words diurnal, nocturnal, sanguinary, auxiliaries, lachrymose, perspiration, gustatory, somnolent, indefatigable, timidity, oleaginous and farinaceous, has accomplished her purpose in a thrilling tale entitled, "The Fair Captive of Castel Negre." This is one of the quietest and most subdued passages: "And even as she mused the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard along the labyrinthian avenues of the outspreading park. It was Juanita's Alphonso de Cosna Blanca and his retainers. Reining in his prancing steed beneath her casement window, he cried, in oleaginous and farinaceous tones: 'Juanita, appear!'"

IN answer to Shakespeare's conundrum, "What's in a name?" the Syracuse *Times* says that if it is a Russian general's name the entire alphabet is in it.

SPRING FUN.

The best of fun, I tell you, boys—
I wonder if you know?—
Is to get a dozen polywogs
And find out how frogs grow.

You go and catch them in the pond,
Along in early Spring;
And when you stir them up—oh, my!
They squirm like anything.

They are just like a little spot
Of jelly, with two eyes;
And such a funny little tail,
Of quite astounding size.

You put them in a great big dish—
A large bowl is the best;
They swim and squirm and squirm and swim,
And never seem to rest.

Put in some dirt and water plants—
I've known them to eat meat.
They'll grow and grow so beautiful
The girls would call them *sweet*.

And bunches by and by appear—
On each side there are two;
And little legs like sprouting plants,
Will pretty soon peep through.

The legs grow long, the tails grow short;
And by-and-by you'll see
There isn't any tail at all
Where a tail used to be.

And froggy now can jump on land,
Or in the water swim;
And scientific men will now
"Amphibious" call him.

THE VINEGAR-JUG PUZZLE.

The *Interior* tells of a smart boy who was an adept in measuring liquids: You remember the eight-quart jug was full of vinegar. The grocer had an order for four quarts, but only had a three-quart and five-quart measure in his store. The boy was not allowed to waste any of the vinegar and he had no other vessel. So the first thing he did was to fill the three-quart measure full, and then empty it into the five-quart measure. Then he poured his three-quart measure full again, and filled the five-quart measure out of it. Then he vinegar stood thus: Five quarts in the five-quart measure, one in the three-quart measure, and two in the eight-quart jug. He scratched his head a moment, and then emptied the five-quart measure back into the jug. Then he poured the one quart which he had in the three-quart measure into the five-quart measure. Next he poured his three-quart measure full again out of the eight-quart jug, and emptied it into the five-quart measure, which had, as we have said, one quart in it. This made four quarts in the jug and four in the five-quart measure. Next, our smart boy offered to do all the measuring with two measures and the jug. As will be seen by the above, he had measured one quart, two quarts, three quarts, four quarts, five quarts, six quarts, seven quarts, and eight quarts, all with nothing but his three, five and eight-quart measures to do it with.

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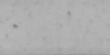

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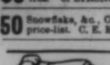
☞ We recommend our readers to *study this carefully.*



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THE HERMIT'S PLOT.

A TALE OF THE SIOUX FRONTIER.

"I NEVER killed a white man in all my life, and it's nigh on to twelve years since I drew a head on a red one; but 'pears like as if I felt curiously ugly jist now. No, sir, Job Launt, you needn't think of goin' back into that thar business this Winter. Yer old blood ort to be cold enough by this time not to keer."

The speaker was evidently addressing himself, for there was no other living listener, and a stranger enough audience he was for any man to talk to.

Less than five feet high, but broad-shouldered, athletic, and not badly proportioned, his bushy white beard almost covered his wrinkled face, and shaggy masses of grizzled curls poured out from under his otter-skin cap, down over his very shoulders.

Old—nobody could tell how old—yet erect and vigorous, and the white mustachios seemed to twirl perpetually in a sort of bitter smile, that suited well with the habitual and almost wolfish cunning of the little gray eyes.

But, for all that, the face of old Job Launt, the Hermit, was one of the saddest faces a man ever looked into, and it was doubly mournful just now as he gazed angrily down upon the ruin of humanity before him.

"There was no other living listener," and the dead do not hear; but the bloody mass at the feet of old Job Launt had been a man an hour or so before.

"It's nobody but Whisky Sykes, and I wonder what ill-will they had again him?" continued Job. "He's no loss to the settlement, and least of all to his own folks. All the red devils got out of him was his good-for-nothing gray scalp and his gun—but, then, that was a good one. I wish I knowed, sartin sure, if that thar cussed half-breed was a-playin' into thar hands; and I'll bet he is. Wal, no, you mustn't do any bettin', old Job; that belongs to yer old murderin' days—that is, if it's murder to kill Injuns when you've got a count of blood to make up. You made up yours clean and squar, you did, and you'd better not take on another job o' that sort. What's more, Aleck Sanders is half white. Yer a good shot, Job Launt, but how'd ye go to work to put a ragged hole through the Injun half of him an' not shoot daylight into the white par'? Somebody ort to try it on—Bill Manton, or somebody else—but don't you do it. You'd better do up yer sexton work; if it's on'y to spite the wolves, and then you go ter the village."

The bitter Winter day—for it was still March—was drawing to a close that threatened a stormy night, and Job Launt set about the dismal task before him with an energy that spoke well for his toughened sinews, while the charity of it belied the now all but ferocious bitterness of his grim visage.

A chasm in the rocks on the hillside was speedily selected, and into this Job bore the poor remains that redskin savagery had left of Whisky Sykes. Even if the snow had not been so deep, the flinty hardness of the frozen soil would have prevented the preparation of any other sepulchre then and there, and the heavy flat stones and fragments of trees with which Job closed the chasm were an abundant safeguard against four-footed wolves, now that the biped ones had done their work.

The task to which Job Launt had set himself had been by no means devoid of peril, since he could not guess how near or far might be the destroyers of the vagabond hunter he was burying; but he seemed to have no thought of fear, only muttering to himself at the end of his work:

"High on to twelve years since I come up yer among the rocks, and every Winter I've covered up a man like that, jest a leetle before Spring. Twelve's a round number. That's luck in twelve. Does it mean that won't be any more? Or does it mean we're about ready for the next dozen? Or does it mean that my stint is about done? Can't tell edzackly, but I wouldn't mind making it a baker's dozen if I could have my pick of Aleck Sanders to wind up with—leastways, the Injun half of him."

Destitute as he was of merely personal fear, the queer old forest-sexton might scarcely have toiled so steadily if he could have heard a low-voiced conversation that was going forward at that very moment within long-rifle range of him, among the shadows of some snow-laden hemlock saplings.

"No, no; let ole man be. Bad medicine, go shoot one man while he bury anoder. You kill him, den you sure be kill next."

The speaker was unmistakably a Sioux brave in his war-paint, but the man whose arm he had seized and to whom he was urging his superstitious philosophy, might almost have passed for a white man of the rough-and-ready frontier sort.

A practiced observer, indeed, would have suggested "Half-breed, most likely," and such he was; but Aleck Sanders was just the person to be touched by such an argument as his companion used. No Indian on the border could have had a keener dread of what he called "bad luck" and the red man's "bad medicine."

His reply, therefore, was simply:

"Reckon you're right, and that's bad luck in meddling with such a critter as old Job, anyhow. All I'm 'feared of is that he'll go and stir up the settlement about it."

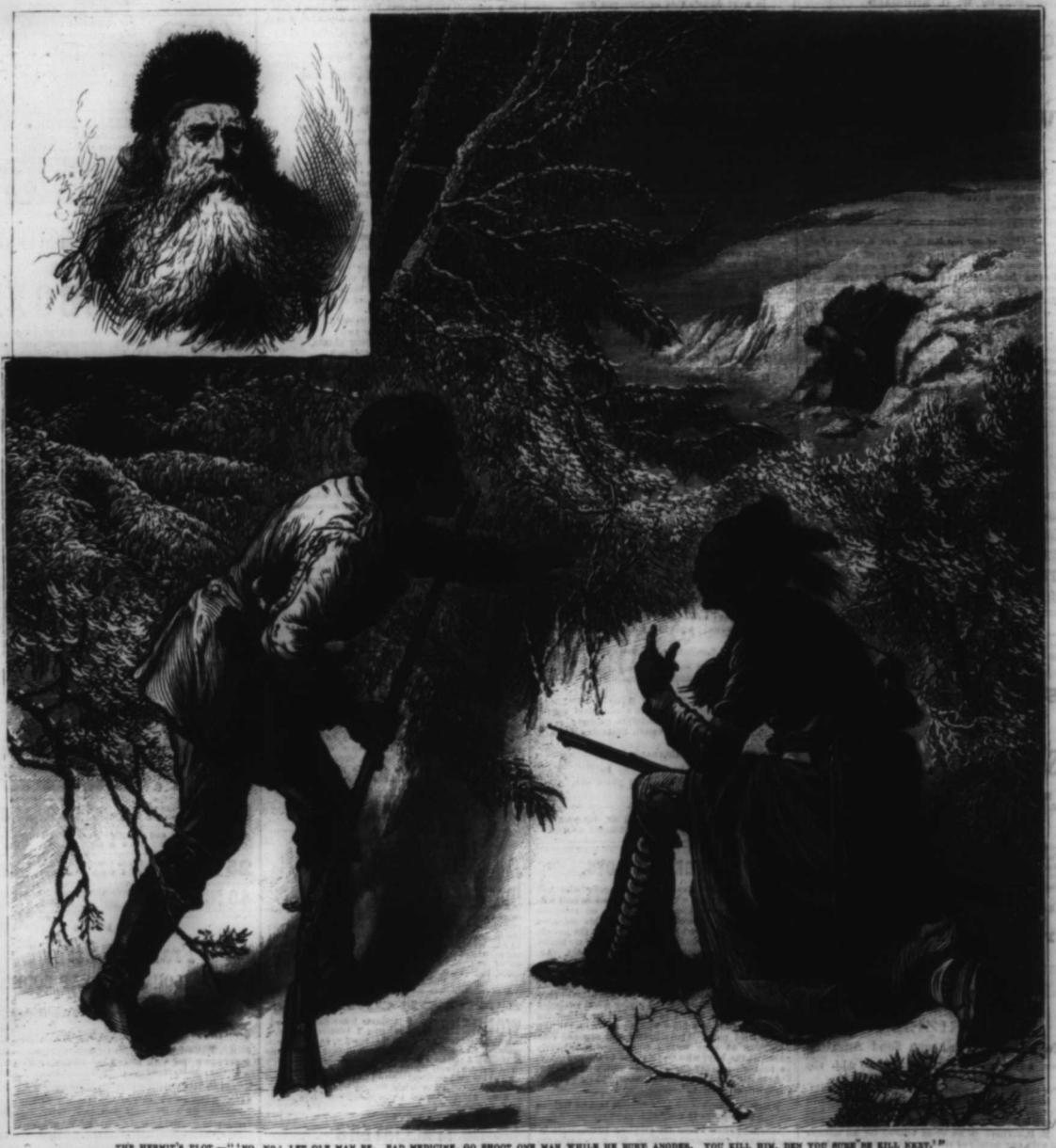
"Den, what for you shoot oder man?" sharply replied the warrior. "No hurry for one scalp. Get 'em all in few days. Own tauht, I say."

"Wal, Yaller Wolf, it's no use you and me quarreling. They won't make no great fuss over Whisky Sykes, and I reckon I kin fix it. I'll make 'em believe old Job shot him for coming up yer among his rocks. They don't like him any too well, nohow, and half of 'em's 'feared as death of him."

"All right, den," more cordially responded Yellow Wolf. "Me understand. You watch close. Tell all day do, so we catch 'em. Den you hab squaw; hab what want. Yellow Wolf and Sioux braves take all de rest."

The nature of the bargain was reasonably clear, and in a few moments more the two had said their say and separated, for old Job Launt had finished his sexton-work, bound on his snowshoes, and disappeared among the rocks and trees, his two enemies did not seem to care whither. The Yellow Wolf made a reasonably straight path toward the hill-ranges to the northward, while his half-white fellow-conspirator strode rapidly away in a nearly opposite direction.

[For conclusion, see page 221.]



THE HERMIT'S PLOT.—"'NO, NO; LET OLE MAN BE. BAD MEDICINE, GO SHOOT ONE MAN WHILE HE BURY ANODER. YOU KILL HIM, DEN YOU SURE BE KILL NEXT.'"